

INSIGHTS INTO EARLY LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT: AN INVESTIGATION OF SPEECH ACQUISITION IN 25-MONTH-OLD TODDLER

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Article History Received: March 2024 Revised: June 2024 Published: July 2024</p> <p>Keywords Language acquisition; Language development; Phonemes; Psycholinguistics; Toddler;</p>	<p><i>This study delves into the early language development of a 25-month-old toddler, emphasizing phonological aspects encompassing consonants, vowels, and diphthongs. Conducted in Palembang in December 2023, the research employs a qualitative methodology utilizing a case study approach. The investigation aims to address the crucial role of phonological development in early language acquisition and its implications for linguistic theory and pedagogy. By focusing on the phonological repertoire of a toddler identified as "M. AH," this study contributes to bridging the gap in research regarding early phonological development in Bahasa Indonesia-speaking children. Key research questions include identifying the range of phonological elements mastered by the toddler and exploring potential factors influencing their linguistic development. The analysis reveals the toddler's adeptness in articulating various phonemes, including 14 consonants, six vowels, and several diphthongs, within their linguistic environment. These findings shed light on the intricate process of early language acquisition and underscore the importance of understanding phonological development in diverse linguistic contexts. Methodologically, the research utilizes direct observation and recording techniques to capture and analyze the toddler's linguistic interactions and productions. Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the early stages of language acquisition, offering implications for both research and practice in child language development and education.</i></p>
<p>How to cite: Aprilia, F., & Neisya, N. (2024). Insights into Early Language Development: An Investigation of Speech Acquisition in 25-Month-Old Toddler. <i>JOLLT Journal of Languages and Language Teaching</i>, 12(3), 1491-1502. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.33394/jollt.v12i3.11123</p>	

INTRODUCTION

One of the paramount elements in interpersonal communication pertains to the utilization of linguistic expression. As elucidated by Chaer (2003), language encompasses an arbitrary system of symbols employed by societal cohorts for the purposes of collaboration, interaction, and self-identification. Moreover, language may be construed as a proficient conduit for effective interpersonal exchange among individuals across diverse contexts. It serves as a vehicle for the transmission of concepts from the originator to the recipient, whether orally or in written form. Language, thus, assumes the role of an intermediary instrument in facilitating human engagement and discourse. Despite its intrinsic association with human beings, quantifying the precise multitude of languages globally remains elusive. Sumarsono (2002) posits that language serves as a platform for the expression of societal aspirations, communal behaviours, and the revelation of cultural intricacies, encompassing technological innovations fostered by linguistic communities.

Fundamentally, communication entails the cultivation of two essential competencies: the aptitude to comprehend the language employed by interlocutors (receptive language) and

the proficiency in generating language (productive language) (Hetherington & Parke, 1986).

The developmental trajectory of language acquisition in children poses ongoing challenges and questions. Language acquisition by children is a skill that has fascinated linguists and psychologists for a long period of time. The structure of language is complex, and the ability of children to acquire such a complex system shortly after birth remains a mystery (Narafshan, Sadighi, Bagheri & Shokrpour, 2013). At 6 months of age, infants are limited to little more than babbling sounds, yet by the time they reach 2 or 3 years old, children display a remarkable grasp of the intricate patterns within their language. This proficiency extends to the ability to apply words heard to novel situations and to utilize grammatical structures in diverse contexts. This achievement, which serves as a cornerstone of human cognition, has appeared resistant to elucidation through conventional learning mechanisms (Gentner & Namy, 2016).

Although infants display an innate capacity for speech production, their journey towards linguistic competence is marked by various hurdles. The process of acquiring language starts with exposure to auditory stimuli in the environment, particularly from primary caregivers. However, the disparity in language acquisition rates among children and the complexity of linguistic structures raise questions about how they internalize language without formal instruction. According to Mukalel (2003), infants are innately endowed with the rudimentary capacity for speech production, facilitated by their biological faculties. This innate potential finds expression in babbling, characterized by the replication of phonetic patterns initially modeled by caregivers, eventually culminating in the infant's spontaneous vocalizations. Subsequently, the developmental progression involves the refinement of articulatory skills through interaction with objects and situational stimuli. Ultimately, children advance to a stage where they demonstrate enhanced linguistic competence, evidenced by their ability to respond to inquiries and wield language more adeptly. Furthermore, the absence of formal educational tools accentuates the autonomous nature of language acquisition, leaving many children to navigate this intricate process independently. Discrepancies in developmental milestones, such as delayed speech, highlight the variability in language acquisition rates among children.

The process of language acquisition commences shortly after birth, as infants are exposed to the auditory stimuli of their immediate environment, particularly the nurturing tones of their primary caregiver, typically the mother. This auditory immersion serves as the foundation for linguistic development throughout infancy. Parents, notably the mother, play a pivotal role as the primary source of linguistic input, crucial for the infant's initial language acquisition endeavours. As the mother interacts with her baby, the infant attentively listens to her vocalizations, gradually endeavouring to replicate these utterances. This initial phase of vocalization, characterized by the production of single-syllable, vowel-like sounds, is termed as "cooing," signifying the infant's nascent attempts at communication and language expression. The intricate nature of language structure, as expounded by Narafshan et al. (2013), presents a profound paradox: how do children masterfully internalize a sophisticated linguistic framework without the guidance of formal instruction? This enduring puzzle has spurred scholars to undertake comprehensive inquiries, endeavouring to uncover the intricate mechanisms underpinning this remarkable cognitive achievement. Additionally, the absence of formal educational tools in the acquisition of a first language, as highlighted by Warni et al. (2023), accentuates the autonomous and self-driven nature of this linguistic journey.

The capacity for language acquisition varies among children, with some demonstrating rapid development while others exhibit moderate or slower progression, such as those who struggle to articulate clearly even beyond the age of three (Aprilia, 2021). Children acquire their first language through stages including the cooing, babbling, holophrastic, telegraphic, and multiword stages, which are universal milestones in language development.

Language acquisition occurs within the child's brain through innate faculties known as

Language Acquisition Devices (LAD), as conceptualized by Chomsky, facilitating language development (Aprilia, 2021). Pateda (1990) delineates four stages of children's language development: babbling at six months, one-word utterances at one year, two-word expressions at two years, and telegraphic speech resembling concise messages. By the age of two to three, children typically amass a substantial vocabulary, intricate phonological and grammatical systems, and the requisite social conventions for effective language use (Aprilia, 2022). Research into children's language acquisition is imperative, offering insights and solutions to pertinent issues while contributing to linguistic theory development. Phonology, a branch of linguistics focusing on the sounds within languages, is pivotal in distinguishing lexical meanings (Alduais, 2015). It determines or influences linguistic theories by examining sound system complexities, regularities, and limitations (Aprilia, 2021). Variations in phonological acquisition among children underscore the genetic and developmental diversity inherent in language acquisition processes.

The acquisition of a native language typically occurs in distinct stages. These stages encompass the speechless period, characterized by the absence of verbal communication; the stage of producing sounds with errors; the emergence of the first-word period, signifying the initial lexical development; a subsequent stage marked by constructing sentences with increasing vocabulary; and finally, a stage indicating the child's ability to acquire language fluency and surpassing the telegraphic stage, progressing towards infinite linguistic capabilities (Al-Hamzi, Sartini, Al-Shrgabi & Al-Maamari, 2021).

Research into children's language acquisition, including phonological development, is crucial for understanding the underlying mechanisms and addressing challenges faced by young learners. Many children grow up hearing and acquiring more than two languages simultaneously (Johnson & Wilson, 2002). However, despite previous studies exploring various facets of language acquisition, there remains a gap in understanding the phonological obstacles encountered by toddlers in verbal expression. Specifically, the research seeks to address the following questions: 1) What phonological elements does a 25-month-old toddler master in both Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Palembang? 2) What factors influence the toddler's phonological development? 3) What insights can be gained from examining the phonological challenges encountered by the toddler?

This study aims to fill this gap by examining the sounds produced by a 25-month-old boy and identifying phonological challenges in his verbal communication. By delving into the complexities of first language acquisition, this research seeks to provide valuable insights for educators and parents, ultimately contributing to fostering optimal linguistic development in young children.

Literature Review

Psycholinguistics emerged as an interdisciplinary field in the early 1950s, combining elements of psychology and linguistics. The term itself, "psycholinguistics," is a blend of "psych-" from psychology and "linguistics." Theoretical underpinnings of psycholinguistics integrate the methodologies of psychology with those of linguistics. In essence, psycholinguistics investigates the relationship between language and psychology, examining how linguistic behavior correlates with underlying psychological processes. The primary objective of psycholinguistics is to explore the connection between language and behavior. Additionally, psycholinguistics is the study of the interplay between language and the mind, particularly focusing on the processes involved in language acquisition and memory retention (Salim & Mehawesh, 2014).

Language acquisition is reliant upon neuro-psychological processes. It contrasts with learning and operates as a subconscious process akin to how children acquire their first

language. Consequently, language acquisition stands as an integral component of the unity of all languages. Language acquisition is influenced and controlled by two powerful factors – heredity (nature) and environment (nurture) (Meniado, 2016).

Previous studies have explored various facets of language acquisition, shedding light on phonological acquisition in multilingual contexts (Amaro & Wrembel, 2016; Sypianska, 2016) and pragmatic phenomena in second language acquisition (Sams, 2015). These inquiries contribute to a deeper understanding of language acquisition and its implications across linguistic domains. The study conducted by Amaro and Wrembel (2016), as published in the *International Journal of Multilingualism*, focuses on examining the acquisition of phonology in a third language among children. Specifically, it aims to provide an overview of the current state of knowledge in this area and outline potential directions for future research.

Similarly, Sypianska (2016) investigated multilingual acquisition of vowels in L1 Polish, L2 Danish, and L3 English, with the objective of discerning cross-language influences within the linguistic repertoire of multilingual speakers. The study, also published in the *International Journal of Multilingualism*, particularly delves into the impact of English and Danish on Polish vowels among bilingual and multilingual individuals, revealing higher and thinner Polish L1 vowels influenced by English L2 and Danish L3. Moreover, Sams (2015) explored the acquisition of T/V pronouns in L2 Spanish, as outlined in the *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*. The research aims to demonstrate that while general rules governing the use of T/V in L2 Spanish are adequate, factors such as exposure to natural language contexts, explicit teaching awareness, and study abroad experiences can enhance students' proficiency in employing these pragmatic features.

These diverse studies collectively underscored the intricate nature of language acquisition, addressing both phonological mastery in multilingual environments and pragmatic nuances in second language learning. Amaro and Wrembel's investigation highlighted the evolving landscape of phonological acquisition, particularly in the realm of third language acquisition among children, offering insights into the current knowledge landscape and paving the way for future research avenues. Similarly, Sypianska's exploration delved into the multilayered influences shaping vowel acquisition across multiple languages, shedding light on the dynamic interplay between linguistic repertoires and cross-language influences. Additionally, Sams' research underscored the importance of contextual factors and pedagogical approaches in refining learners' proficiency in utilizing pragmatic features, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of language acquisition processes. Collectively, these inquiries contributed to a nuanced understanding of language acquisition dynamics, enriching discourse across linguistic domains and informing educational practices aimed at facilitating language learning and proficiency development.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopted a descriptive approach, utilizing qualitative methods to analyze non-numerical data, rendering it a qualitative descriptive study in its entirety. Qualitative inquiry is a methodology aimed at delving into and comprehending the significance individuals or groups assign to a social or human issue (Aprilia & Neisya, 2023). This method entails the emergence of inquiries and methodologies, with data typically gathered in the participant's environment. Analysis of the data proceeds inductively, progressing from specific instances to overarching themes, while the researchers interpret the significance of the collected data (Neisya, Aprilia & Anita, 2023).

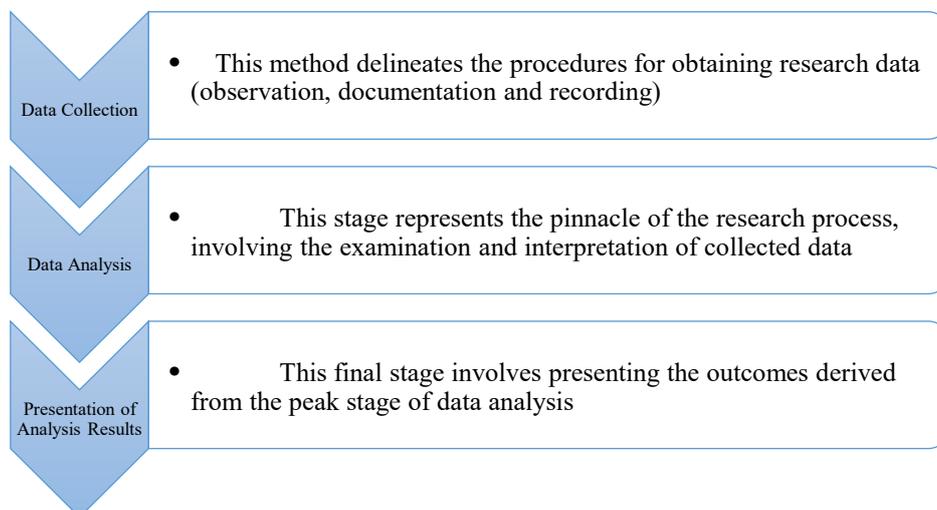
Employing a case study methodology, the focus centered on a young boy, herein referred to as the respondent. Data, comprising speech sounds, were collected in December 2023 and subsequently transcribed into phonetic notation.

At the time of data collection, the respondent was 25 months old, with the following particulars:

Table 1
Respondent's Identity

Initials: M. AH
Age: 25 months / 2 years 1 month
Place of Birth: Palembang
Date of Birth: November 16th, 2021
Address: Ahmad Yani Street, Saudara 2 Lane, Palembang

The respondent, born and raised in Palembang, was immersed in an environment predominantly characterized by the use of *Bahasa Palembang* or Palembang Language within his family. The individuals within the respondent's immediate surroundings played a significant role in shaping his acquisition of the first language. During the process of data collection through observation, documentation and recording, it was noted that the respondent primarily engaged in babbling and two-word utterances, often prompted by interactions with those around him. Observation served as a method of gathering data; an approach for inquiry and to a great extent, an essential element of all qualitative research (Uwamusi & Ajisebiyawo, 2023). Additionally, documentation and recording served as a reliable and resilient research methodology that centered on gathering data from documented sources of evidence (Aprilia, Neisya & Whariyanti, 2023). The data collection technique employed in this study comprised three successive strategic stages, which were:



In the data collection phase, this research employed both observation and recording techniques to gather comprehensive data. The observation technique involved engaging in participant observation, which required researchers to immerse themselves in the study environment. This direct interaction with social and material phenomena over an extended duration allowed researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the routines, norms, and contexts within the study setting (Dean, 2019). Such immersion is crucial as it enables researchers to observe and document the natural occurrences and interactions that are essential for a thorough analysis.

During the observation process, speech data were meticulously transcribed into phonetic notation. These transcriptions formed the primary data corpus for the study. The use of phonetic notation ensured that the nuances of speech, such as pronunciation and intonation, were accurately captured, providing a detailed and precise representation of the spoken data. Once

the transcriptions were completed, they were segmented as needed to facilitate further analysis. The data corpus was systematically categorized into phonemes and words, ensuring a structured approach to data organization. This categorization allowed for a detailed examination of the individual components of speech, making it easier to identify patterns and draw meaningful conclusions. All instances of phonemes were meticulously recorded and grouped into vowel and consonant phonemes. This detailed recording and grouping were essential for analyzing the phonetic characteristics of the speech data. By categorizing the phonemes, the researchers could systematically study the distribution and frequency of vowel and consonant sounds, contributing to a deeper understanding of the phonetic structure of the language being studied.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

According to the analysis results, M. AH (the respondent) was characterized as bright and exuberant boy. Although he often communicated in short, simplistic phrases, his enthusiasm and positive energy were readily apparent. While engaging with him required some gentle encouragement, once motivated, his lively and engaging personality effortlessly radiated.

Consonants

There were 14 consonants phonemes that appeared during the research, which were /p/, /b/, /m/, /t/, /d/, /s/, /n/, /l/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/, /j/, /g/, /k/, and /ŋ/.

- **Bilabial sounds** including /p/, /b/, and /m/ have shown distinct articulation. For example:

[p] [Bapak], [bibip], [apo] “apa”, [idup] “hidup”, [epat] “empat”, [umpah] “tumpah”, [apan] “delapan”, [puluh] “sepuluh”, [Hapiz] *referring to himself, [Papa] *referring to his uncle.

[b] [Ibu], [buka], [bibip], [embee] *goat sound, [Mbak] *referring to his babysitter, [bebek].

[m] [belom], [maung] *cat sound, [muu] *cow sound, [embee] *goat sound, [main], [mamam] *eating sound, [meya] “merah”, [umpah] “tumpah”, [micii] “permisi”, [umah] “rumah”, [ima] “lima”, [enam], [nemo] *referring to his toy fish, [inum] “minum”, [mano] “mana”, [mimik] *gesture for asking for milk, [Mbak] *referring to his babysitter.

- **The alveolar sounds** such as /t/, /d/, /s/, /n/, and /l/ were also very clear. Such as:

[t] [takut], [aket] “paket”, [iput] “siput”, [atu, catu] “satu”, [epat] “empat”, [titut, tinut] *car honking sounds, [tiup]

[d] [idak] “tidak”, [dinding], [dua], [Adek] *referring to his little sister, [udah, dah] “sudah”, [idup] “hidup”

[s] [uis] “tulis”, [asih] “terimakasih”, [awas]

[n] [olong] “tolong”, [ain] “main”, [Nemo] *referring to his toy fish, [enam]

[l] [olong] “tolong”, [elok] “melok” (ikut in Bahasa Indonesia), [ilan] “sembilan”

- The vibrating sound /r/ presented some difficulty for the respondents, often being substituted with /j/. For instance:

[meja] “merah”, [ojen] “oranye”

- The respondent has successfully produced numerous **palatal sounds**, including /ʒ/, /tʃ/, and /j/. For example:

[ʒ] [iʒau] “hijau”

[tʃ] [utʃing] “kucing”

[j] [meja] “merah”, [ojen] “oranye”

- The respondent demonstrated clear articulation of several **velar sounds**, including /g/, /k/, and /ŋ/. For instance:

[g] [iga] “tiga”

[k] [buka, uka] “buka”, [idak] “tidak”, [takut], [aket] “paket”, [kuning], [elok, melok] (ikut in Bahasa Indonesia), [Mbak] *referring to his babysitter, [Adek] *referring to his little sister, [mimik] *gesture for asking for milk

[ŋ] [mauŋ] *cat sound, [auŋ] *lion sound, [kuniŋ] “kuning”

Vowels

Vowels constitute essential phonemes crucial for language acquisition. The respondent exhibited fluent pronunciation of these phonemes during the observation. Six vowel phonemes were identified: /a/, /i/, /u/, /e/, /ə/, and /ɔ/.

[a] [Bapak], [asih], [buka, uka], [agi] “lagi”, [nyam, mam] *eating sound, [Mbak] *referring to his babysitter, [Hapiz] *referring to self, [Papa] *referring to hisuncle

[i] [Ibu], [agi] “lagi”, [dinding], [icak] “cicak”, [micii] “permisi”, [iput] “siput”, [ima] “lima”, [cincin], [Hapiz] *referring to self

<i>[u]</i> [<i>Ibu</i>]. [<i>maung</i>] *cat sound, [<i>aung</i>] *lion sound, [<i>muu</i>] *cow sound, [<i>umpah</i>] “tumpah”, [<i>atu, catu</i>] “satu, [<i>ujuh</i>] “tujuh” [<i>puluh</i>] “sepuluh, [<i>cucu</i>] “susu”
<i>[e]</i> [<i>mbee</i>] *goat sound, [<i>oleh</i>] “boleh”, [<i>aket</i>] “paket”, [<i>es</i>]
<i>[ə]</i> [<i>ənam</i>], [<i>əpat</i>] “empat”
<i>[ɔ]</i> [<i>ɔlong</i>] “tolong”, [<i>belum</i>] “belum”, [<i>ɔleh</i>] “boleh”

Diphthongs

The respondent frequently pronounced several **diphthongs** during the observation. These included /*aʊ*/, /*aɪ*/, /*ɪu*/, and /*ʊə*/.

<i>[aʊ]</i> [<i>maʊng</i>] *cat sound, [<i>aʊng</i>] *lion sound, [<i>ijaw</i>] “hijau” [<i>aʊ</i>] “mau”
<i>[aɪ]</i> [<i>ain</i>] “main”
<i>[ɪu]</i> [<i>ɪup</i>]
<i>[ʊə]</i> [<i>dua</i>] “dua”

Discussion

The study of language acquisition has advanced significantly in recent decades, offering substantial evidence on how specific linguistic components develop and how children's creativity operates within the boundaries of their innate language abilities (Goodluck, 2011). These advancements have deepened our understanding of the intricate processes involved in acquiring language, shedding light on how children learn to communicate effectively and creatively using their first language. This body of research underscores the remarkable capacity of young learners to assimilate linguistic structures and vocabulary, often displaying a high level of creativity despite the constraints imposed by their developing cognitive abilities. One of the most thoroughly investigated aspects of first language acquisition is the impact of age. Since the 1960s, numerous linguists and applied linguists have focused on understanding how age influences the ability to learn and master a first language. This extensive body of research has consistently highlighted that younger children are particularly adept at acquiring language, often achieving fluency with remarkable ease compared to older learners. These studies suggest that there is a strong correlation between age and language learning proficiency, pointing to age as a critical factor in the process of language acquisition.

One of the most contentious and debated issues in language acquisition research is the concept of a critical period for language learning (Heidar, 2012). The critical period hypothesis posits that there is a specific window of time during which language acquisition occurs most naturally and efficiently. According to this theory, language learning abilities decline after this critical period, making it more challenging for individuals to achieve native-like proficiency if they begin learning a language later in life. This hypothesis has sparked considerable debate among researchers, with some providing compelling evidence in support of the critical period, while others argue for a more flexible understanding of language learning capabilities across different ages. Overall, the advancements in language acquisition research have significantly enriched our understanding of how linguistic abilities develop and the factors that influence this process. The investigation into the impact of age and the critical period hypothesis continues to be a focal point of scholarly discussion, driving ongoing research and debate in the field. These

insights not only enhance theoretical knowledge but also have practical implications for language teaching and learning strategies, particularly in designing effective educational programs that align with learners' developmental stages.

Based on the observed interactions and recorded data, researchers may conclude that neurological maturity aligns with children's phonological acquisition development. At 25 months old, a child's language input is predominantly derived from external factors and media such as toys, family interactions, interactions with peers, kitchen tools, and similar sources in their environment. These media significantly contribute to the child's semantic acquisition, gradually leading to the production of appropriate pronunciation (Safitri, 2020). In support of this assertion, Tarigan (1985) noted that utterances produced during this phenomenon fall within the holophrastic stage. During this stage, a child produces a phoneme to represent the semantics of an entire sentence. Tarigan (1985) illustrated this phenomenon within the context of the Indonesian language, using the word "nasi" (rice) as an example. For instance, "nasi" could be interpreted as "a child likes eating rice," "a child has eaten rice," "this rice is not delicious," or "do you like eating rice?"

Furthermore, drawing upon a series of observations, the initial language acquisition of M. AH appears predominantly innate or biologically driven. His possession of a typical and operational human brain facilitates the reception of linguistic inputs and the generation of communicative outputs. His overt behaviors, as evidenced across diverse linguistic tasks, substantiate Lenneberg's nativist theory, Chomsky's innateness hypothesis, and McNeill's Language Acquisition Device (LAD) (Orillos, 1998). For instance, the presence of a human brain capable of processing inputs enables him to respond appropriately to various communicative contexts. The comprehension and articulation of words would be unattainable without such a central processing unit - the brain, housing distinct regions with specialized linguistic functions. Moreover, it was noted that the subject acquired a repertoire of Bahasa Palembang words and phrases, albeit occasionally flawed, devoid of formal instruction. The depth of his linguistic proficiency (vocabulary, grammar, phonology, syntax, etc.), considering his tender age, may prove remarkable to some observers. M. AH autonomously assimilated certain lexicons and even devised his own linguistic conventions. This phenomenon underscores the intrinsic nature of language acquisition and learning. Language acquisition unfolds concomitantly with individual growth and maturation, thereby buttressing Chomsky's innateness hypothesis (Orillos, 1998).

M. AH demonstrates an ability to differentiate speech sounds from other environmental noises, as evidenced by his response to his father or mother when called by name, while ignoring calls directed at his siblings. Additionally, he can identify objects (such as sister, brother, sofa, chair, TV, iPad, etc.) when prompted by the researcher, indicating his capacity to associate sounds with tangible objects. Furthermore, he exhibits the capability to categorize linguistic elements into distinct classes; for instance, he distinguishes between nouns (names) and verbs (actions). When prompted by his father to dance, he responds by moving or shaking his body, recognizing "dance" as an action rather than a noun at his developmental stage. Moreover, he can discern his father's emotional state based on vocal intensity and facial expressions, and he poses questions when unfamiliar with the names of objects, persons, or actions, suggesting an ongoing process of linguistic self-improvement.

While acknowledging the significant influence of biological factors on language acquisition and learning, the researchers also underscore the pivotal role of the environment in M. AH's linguistic development. Reviewing pertinent literature reveals concerns and discussions regarding the roles of imitation, correction and reinforcement, analogy, and structured inputs in a child's language acquisition. In M. AH's case, the researchers observed how these mechanisms facilitated his language development. Language acquisition parallels

the acquisition of any other skill through imitation. M. AH attempts to reproduce words or sentences based on adult conversations he overhears, albeit sometimes hindered by delays in speech mechanism development. Despite occasional inaccuracies, his attempts at imitation demonstrate a desire to learn and improve.

During observations, M. AH frequently mimics his father's speech patterns. Speech patterns could potentially influence the atmosphere, civility, and truthfulness (Utama & Abdullah, 2022). Speech style or patterns could be influenced by the social factors (Putra & Rosa, 2019). While he enjoys imitating, he becomes easily irritated when the roles are reversed. Nevertheless, not all imitations are accurate. His father provides corrective feedback by substituting incorrect words with the appropriate ones and repeating sentences or questions slowly to aid comprehension. With consistent correction and reinforcement, M. AH gradually acquires mastery over the correct words and sentences, illustrating his capacity to learn through guidance. By speech style, people can differentiate to whom they speak based on the set-up, function and norm of the social context (Puspita & Fatwa, 2020). Speech style influences people to arrange the right style of language while they get interacting and communicating with others (Ratnawati, Rosmiaty & Pratiwi, 2021).

M. AH encounters difficulties primarily in grammatical and discursive aspects of language. He exhibits limited vocabulary, phonological errors, grammatical lapses, particularly in sentence structure, and challenges in composing coherent discourse. While his proficient brain facilitates linguistic processing and function, these difficulties are largely attributed to environmental factors and mechanisms. Given his young age and limited exposure to language, his communicative proficiency across various constructs remains below that of adults. However, when compared to peers of similar age, M. AH is not considered to have significant challenges in language acquisition.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the data, it is evident that the respondent has developed proficiency in pronouncing sounds or phonemes in *Bahasa Palembang* (Palembang Language). These phonemes encompass a range of consonants, vowels, and diphthongs. Specifically, the respondent has successfully learned 14 consonant phonemes, including /p/, /b/, /m/, /t/, /d/, /s/, /n/, /l/, /z/, /tʃ/, /j/, /g/, /k/, and /ŋ/. Additionally, the respondent has mastered six vowel phonemes: /a/, /i/, /u/, /e/, /ə/, and /ɔ/, as well as four diphthong phonemes: /aʊ/, /aɪ/, /iʊ/, and /ʊə/. One notable challenge encountered by the respondent pertains to the pronunciation of the vibrating sound /r/, which often gets substituted with /j/. This observation provides valuable insights into the complexities of the respondent's phonetic abilities.

However, it is important to note that these difficulties do not diminish the respondent's overall linguistic competence. Instead, they underscore the self-directed and autonomous nature of the respondent's language acquisition journey. This aligns with existing literature highlighting the natural and swift progression from linguistic infancy to fluency during early childhood. The emergence of prominent diction in children typically begins around the age of 3. During the first two years of life, children primarily absorb language through listening and imitation, building a foundational vocabulary for future communication. When children start to actively use words, they demonstrate their ability to effectively express their ideas in communication with others. This process of language acquisition is heavily influenced by the stimuli provided by the family and environment. Thus, it is advisable for parents to consistently provide language-rich environments to support their children's linguistic development, alongside their physical growth. Further research is warranted to delve deeper into the unique aspects of each child's language acquisition journey.

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