

THE HYPOTHESES OF FLA AND CHILDREN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: This article is aimed at explaining the hypotheses of FLA (First Language Acquisition) and children language development. As we know that there are many hypotheses and theories concerning about language FLA and language development as well. Therefore this article attempts to explain the most applicable hypothesis of FLA and also explain the justifications. Then this paper also explains what the sequences stages of children language development.

Literally there are only three most prominent related hypotheses dealing with FLA. They are Innateness or nativism, behaviorism, and cognitivism. From those three hypotheses the author regards that the most applicable hypotheses dealing with FLA is innateness hypothesis. It explains that children automatically acquire language because they are equipped with a special language device called LAD (Language Acquisition Device) in their brain. While the other two are more appropriate to explain second language learning or SLA.

Then concerning the language development of children, basically there are three main processes of language acquisition. They are phonological development, syntactical development, and semantic development.

Keywords: FLA, Children Language Development

INTRODUCTION

Psycholinguistics is one of linguistics branches. Psycholinguistics comes from two different terms. Actually it is a hybrid combinatorial discipline. They are “psychology” which is the scientific study of human mind and “linguistics” which is the scientific study of language. Therefore the definition of psycholinguistics according to Goldstein (2016) is “the study of psychological and neurobiological factors that enable human to acquire, to use, to comprehend, and to produce language.” Here are some definitions of psycholinguistics based on some experts as the source of understanding. Hartley states “Psycholinguistics investigates the interrelation of language and mind in processing and producing utterances and in language acquisition” (Hartley, 1982:16). It means that psycholinguistics is a study of the relationship between language and human brain in processing, producing, and acquiring language. While Osgood and Sebeok state “Psycholinguistics deals directly with the processes of encoding and decoding as they relate states of message to states of communicators” (Osgood & Sebeok, in Stern,

1983:296). The objects of psycholinguistics itself are language, mental phenomena and the relationship between them. Language which is processed in human mind is reflected by mental phenomena. Viewed from psychological aspect or point of view, language production or processing happens in both speaker and listener mind. Similar to these opinions (Slobin, in Chaer, 2003: 5) argued that psycholinguistic tried to describe the psychological processes that take place when someone says some expressions which are heard at the same time or simultaneously in the process of communication and how humans acquire language skills.

Actually there are three main branches of psycholinguistics. They are language processing, neurolinguistics, and language acquisition. Language processing elaborates what happen in the human mind when they speak and what happen when they listen. In other word it studies about what is going on in our central process mechanism underlying this very complex activity. While In neurolinguistics, it is no longer concerning with human mind. However it deals with physical counterpart of human mind which is human brain. The central question here is how is language represented in human brain? While In language acquisition, it studies about how a child acquires his or her mother tongue or first language. In this article, the writer is going to discuss deeply only about language acquisition especially on First Language Acquisition (FLA). All human in the world acquire at least one language. However we do not know how they can acquire it though they are not intentionally taught. As we know that there are three prominent hypotheses concerning with FLA. They are innateness or nativism, behaviorism, and cognitivism hypothesis. The next chapter will discuss about those three hypotheses dealing FLA and the author will compare them on some aspects. .

DISCUSSION

Talking about language acquisition, exactly it must concern about the process of acquisition itself. FLA elaborates processes happening in human mind when they acquire their mother tongue or their first language naturally without being taught by the language teacher. On the other hand the term language acquisition is different from language learning. Language learning is a process of studying language formally and intentionally. We can say that this process happens in a class and taught by a teacher with formal procedures. This topic has very close relation to others topics under psycholinguistics such as language perception, language production, and neurology aspect of language.

Actually, there are two aspects affecting the process of acquiring mother tongue. The first is the aspect of performance which consists of understanding (the ability of observing and perceiving utterances heard by children) and realizing or uttering aspect (the ability of saying utterances by themselves). The second one is the aspect of competency (the ability of acquiring phonology, sentences, and semantics). In accordance to the theory stated by Chomsky (1957, 1965), the aspect of competency involves acquisition of three components of grammar such as semantics, phonology, and syntax. Even though those two processes are different, their combination will improve significantly the linguistics ability of children who understand them well.

Before discussing further about FLA hypotheses, we must be aware that based on the studies conducted by some experts; there are pros and cons between those hypotheses.

Hypotheses in Language Acquisition

Before discussing further about Language acquisition, we must be aware that based on the studies conducted by some experts who conclude that there must be something which people have to help them acquire language. Many experts have different perspective about language acquisition. After observing for a long time through reading and discussing, the writer discovers that there are three prominent hypotheses dealing with it. They are innateness or nativism, behaviorism, and cognitivism hypothesis. Those will be elaborated in the points as follows.

Innateness or Nativism Hypothesis

Every people in the world exactly acquires at least one language under the condition that he or she grows in any society. Every native people surely can perceive and produce utterances of his or her own language. This happens because they have a conscience in their mind. The rule of grammar will be as their competency aspect and the aspect of performance concerns with how people produce language through applying the rule of grammar. The rule of grammar itself consists of phonology, syntax, and semantics components.

This theory arises from the observation conducted by Lenneberg (1967) and Chomsky (1970). The results of the observations are elaborated as follows.

- a. Every normal child exactly acquires his mother tongue if his or her mother introduces it and he or she is not exiled from his mother.
- b. Language acquisition has no relation to the cognitive aspect of a child. It means that sooner or later all children either smart or not they can acquire their mother tongue.
- c. Sentences uttered by children sometimes are grammatically incorrect, incomplete, or view in numbers.
- d. Language cannot be taught to other creature. The other words, only human beings have it.
- e. The stages of language acquisition are gradually in the same stages. Though it depends on the process of the maturity of children.
- f. The structure of language is very complicated but children can acquire it completely within only in a short period (3 to 4 years).

Based on the observation results above, it can be concluded that a new born baby is equipped with a device which can help people to acquire language easily and quickly.

Actually there are two kinds of innateness hypothesis. They are language and mechanism theories (Simanjuntak as cited in Chaer, (2015: 169). Language theory has an assumption that language is not learnt but it is determined by special features of conscience of human beings. On the other hand, mechanism theory believes that the process of language acquisition experienced by human beings determined by the cognitive development which interact with experiences.

This theory is believed as the most appropriate theories dealing with language acquisition. It is believed that human beings are equipped with an amazing thing or device which makes them produce or acquire language easily and quickly. This theory believes that all human beings have it. Miller and Chomsky (1957) call it LAD (Language Acquisition Device). They state that every child has LAD even since he or she was born. LAD is an intellectual conscience device which is for acquiring mother tongue easily and quickly. Then the results are linguistics abilities including phonology, syntax, and semantics. The way LAD works is when a certain language such as Javanese, Arabic, English, or Indonesian is given to LAD. Then a child will save them in his LAD as an input. After that, LAD will form a certain rule grammar as an output. We can see the figure below to see how LAD works.



Figure 1. The Process of LAD

The view of this theory influences others expert's view towards language acquisition. The main idea of this theory is that children since they were born, they are equipped with a device to acquire their mother tongue. Here, It is proven that when children are given inputs of wrong grammatical patterns or incomplete words, they still can acquire it properly. Based on the proof above, Eva Clark as cited in Chaer (2015: 170), states that it is impossible for children to acquire their language syntax without something that can help them. Without this language acquisition device, it must be impossible for them.

The concept of this hypothesis has triggered other researchers to conduct broader coverage about it. At the beginning this hypothesis is focused on syntax acquisition component because the role of semantics and cognition are less noticeable. As stated by Chomsky in Chaer (2015: 170), to acquire language, LAD only needs linguistic input only. The other non-linguistic input such as seeing, feeling, and other non-linguistic knowledge are unimportant in language acquisition.

Recently the development of this hypothesis has been focused on three main elements which were ignored for a long time. Those elements are 1) speech corpus is now not only to develop LAD but also another aspect. 2) Semantic role is regarded more important than syntactic role. 3) The role of cognitive development also plays important role in language acquisition.

Mc Neil as cited in Chaer (2015) states that language theory is known as a strong linguistic universal. And then mechanism theory is known as a weak linguistic universal. The strong version states that language acquisition does not need a cognitive aspect at all (Chomsky, 1970) and Lenneberg (1967). Otherwise the weak version states that cognitive aspect also plays very important role in language acquisition (Piaget 1964 and Slobin 1971).

In recent years, this theory has developed rapidly. For example the theory discovered by Piaget about cognitive development plays an important role. However the latest invention on neuropsycholinguistics has raised the interest of many experts on the strong linguistic universal theory but with the addition of the importance of semantic role in the language development.

The latest invention of neuropsycholinguistics shows that since a newborn baby was born, he or she is equipped with a special part of the brain which has a purpose to acquire language. That must be a big question for those who are proponent of behaviorism and cognitivism hypothesis. If language acquisition embrace behaviorism or cognitivism hypothesis so what human beings have a cortex inside their brain which is especially having a function to acquire language (Simanjuntak via Chaer 2015: 174). Even though this hypothesis triggers controversy among many language experts this hypothesis is still the leading theory of language acquisition.

Behaviorism Hypothesis

This theory is also called *tabularasa* hypothesis. It means a blank paper that represents a new born baby's brain. When a baby born, his brain is like a blank paper then it will be filled with experiences of knowledge about lingual phenomena. This hypothesis was discovered by John Locke, a well-known empirics figure. Then it was spread widely by John Watson, a famous figure of behaviorism hypothesis on psychology.

The experts if this school believes that "infants learn oral language from other human role models through a process involving imitation, rewards, and practice. Human role models in an infant's environment provide the stimuli and rewards," (Cooter & Reutzell, 2004). It means that all of the lingual knowledge acquired by human beings are constructed by experiences experienced by them. This hypothesis regards that linguistics knowledge only consists of relationship formed with a learning way of Stimulation and Response or S-R.

In the early period, a baby who starts to acquire his mother tongue, will try to utter or spell all of speech sounds in the world when reaches babbling period. The baby tries to imitate the sounds uttered by his mother only. Then the baby will try to construct the sound to imitate his parent's utterance. If the sound is correct, so his parents will give him reward such as kiss, laugh, or another rewards. It means that language development is strengthen or supported by rewards or presents, so that behavior will make children enthusiasm to do that behavior. We can say that children language development develop step by step starting from sounds, words, phrases, and sentences. Based on this hypothesis, language is formed from compilations of language behavior which experienced by baby. In other words, there is an analogy that such language behaviors are written on a blank piece of paper in baby's brain.

Unfortunately behaviorism theory cannot explain the creativity of language production. It is impossible that all of the lingual expressions must be written in *tabularasa* because all of the sentences uttered by children are new utterances. Those utterances have not been said before except figurative language, idiom, or fixed

expressions such as “good morning, hello, book worm, etc”. Therefore many experts of nativism give a critique on behaviorism theory. They state that behaviorism theory is failed to explain language acquisition process (Simanjuntak, 1987).

Some experts of innateness theory such as Chomsky criticize this theory. This made Jenkin via Chaer (2015) give explanation about language creativity based on behaviorism theory. Jenkin introduced a theory called *chaining response*. In this hypothesis, it is clear that medium factors done by our brain plays an important role in learning process of *chaining response*.

According to this theory, if someone has recognized a relationship between two or more words like car, machine, and petrol, that would be easier for him to memorize because those three words are related each other. This kind of method of learning is called *chaining response* theory. We can see it on the figure below.

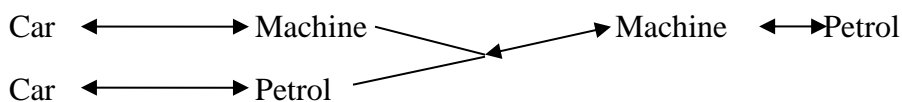


Figure 2. The Scheme of Chaining Response Theory

Based on the hypothesis above, it is clear that someone can produce an utterance if there is a stimulation from outside. Then Skinner (1957) made an enhancement on theory of stimulation and response by specifying them into some kinds as follows.

a. Mand

The word mand is originally from command. It means that the definition of this word is kind of imperative expression. For example when a child wants to drink a glass of milk, this desire will stimulate him to say something in order to get what he actually wants.

b. Tacts

Tact is a thing or something real such as event or things which are triggered by stimulation. For example when we see a car passing as stimulation, so will produce one tact “Car” as response.

c. Echoics

Response which we get from someone’s expressions is called as echoic. If someone hears other people say “car”. It will stimulate us to say so.

d. Textual

We can get lingual response whenever we get textual stimulation. If we read a word, we can get the response about the word itself.

e. Intraverbal Operant

A lingual response closely related to the stimulation will appear if a word given as stimulation. For example when we hear “table”, then another words related to It will appear. Here there response is “chair”. Since both of them have very close relation.

From this hypothesis finally we can draw a conclusion that behaviorism theory is inadequate to explain first language acquisition. Since this theory cannot explain linguistics competence stored in child’s brain. There should be a device to store language behaviors and how this competence is applied to perceive new sentences which have never been expressed.

Cognitivism Hypothesis

Cognitivism hypothesis is introduced by Jean Piaget. This hypothesis in fact has been applied by Piaget as a base to explain language acquisition on children. Actually Piaget did not particularly issue a theory of children language acquisition. For he regards that language is a part of common cognitive development. However Piaget only studies about this common issue. He only issues a hypothesis about cognitivism hypothesis which includes language. However, his followers in Geneva have broadened Piaget's view. So that Sinclair-de Zwart, via Chaer (2015) has formulated the theory of language acquisition in cognitivism theory scope.

According to this hypothesis, language is acquired based on deriamotor structure. These structures are acquired by children through interacting with the environment. The stages of those structures are explained as follows.

- a. Between 0 until 1.5 years old, a child tries to develop their skill to response everything. This stage makes children start building a world of eternal things called conservation of objects. Here a child still keeps in his mind when he sees a thing then when he does not see that again, he still can memorize it in their mind.
- b. Between 2 until 7 years old, a child can form a symbolic representation about things such as imitating, symbolic playing, mental representing, picture representing, and etc.
- c. After cognitive representation stage, the language understanding of children has developed rapidly along their social value. The linguistics structure begins to develop based on common cognitive development after reaching about 2 years old.

According to Piaget's view above, Sinclair de Zwart via Chaer (2015) tries to formulate the stages of language acquisition as follows.

- a. Children tend to express a holophrases from any sounds they hear to express one expression.
- b. If that short sound combinations are perceived by children, then they can express simple sentences with a basic pattern (agent, action, and object) but that is still incorrect because they only imitate them from adults.
- c. When those stages completed, children can express a minimum pattern of sentence better.

From the elaboration above, we can see that this hypothesis in psychology is similar to mechanism nativism hypothesis in linguistics. The difference is only on the name used.

Children Language Development (Stages in Language Acquisition)

In this chapter there will be explanation about process of language acquisition such as phonological development, syntactical development, and semantic development. Beside that, there will be also an explanation about child language development.

1. Phonological Development

The pioneer of this theory is introduced by Jakobson (1968). The main objective of this theory is to explain phonological acquisition based on universal linguistics structures which deal with structuralism rule involving sound changing adjustment. In his research, Jakobson tries to notice when a baby produces sounds in babbling period.

The first stage is phonological development. Here Jakobson (1968) noticed kinds of sounds produced by a baby in babbling period. He discovered that a normal baby will produce many kind of sounds both vowel and consonant. However when the baby starts to acquire the first word, most of those sounds disappear. After a few years, then those sounds appear again. From his observation, Jakobson makes a conclusion that there are two stages in phonological development. They are babbling in form of non-lingual expressions and babbling in form of lingual expressions.

According to Jakobson those two stages have no relation each other because they only happen in a very short time period and seem unclear to describe. However many psycholinguistics experts accept Jakobson's theory. They believe that there are some evidence strengthen Jakobson's theory. They are outlined as follows.

- a. The phonemes [l] and [r] which is frequently appear in babbling period will disappear. Those phonemes will appear again when a baby reaches 3.5 years old to 5 years old.
- b. Deaf babies have the same babbling sounds as normal babies do. However after the babbling period is over, they gradually stop producing those sounds.
- c. Based on Port and Preston (1972), VOT (Voice Onset Time) or the time when a sound drag is released and vocal chord vibration such as phonemes [d] and [t] are different between a baby in babbling period and an adult. This difference makes clear that there is an intermediate phase between babbling period and real sound producing.

The second stage is called as syntactical development. There are many experts who are proponent of theory who regard that syntactical development begins when children reach approximately 2 years old. Here children are able to combine two or more words (holophrases period). Therefore many experts regard that holophrases period is not a part of syntactical development or it has no relation to syntactical development. However contrary to that view, Clark (1977) and Garnham (1977) state that this holophrases period may provide an overview in syntactical development. So that, it is better that this period is a part of syntactical development.

If children are able to utter combination of two words, so they can quickly produce more two words combination. Then gradually their two words utterance will be more easily understood by adults. Therefore many researchers tend to begin language acquisition research from this holophrases period.

The third stage is called as semantic development. This stage is regarded the last stage by experts. Along with transformation generative linguistics which is emphasize the semantic component, so in psycholinguistics the language acquisition is preceded by semantic development. To study semantic development, previously we need to understand what is meant by the word itself. There are some theories about it. Based on the latest semantic theory, meaning can be elaborated according to semantic symbols or

features. Larsson (1989) stated that meaning is a combination between semantic symbols and features.

When we notice on the development or stages of children language acquisition, we will be impressed because it happens gradually and orderly. According to (Aitchison in Harras and Bachari 2009: 50) the stages of language development are demonstrated in the table as follows.

Stages of Language Development	age
1. Crying	Birth
2. Cooning	6 weeks
3. Babbling	6 months
4. Intonation patterns	8 months
5. One-word utterances	1 year
6. Two-words utterances	18 months
7. Inflectional words	2 years
8. Negative and Interrogative	2 ¼ years
9. Rare and complex constructions	5 years
10. Mature speech	10 years

Table 1. Stages of Language Development (Acquisition)

Stage 1: Crying

The way a baby cry has universal meaning. It means that a mother from Indonesia will understand the meaning well when a baby from the whole world cries because it is only an instinctive communication system like an animal does. In addition it is a non lingual expression. Therefore it is incorrect to say that it is a stage of language development.

Stage 2: Cooning

In this period a baby try to produce sounds from the back of throat, laughs and giggles, although the voice uttered by a baby is similar to vowel sound, spectrogram indicates that it is not the same as an adult does. Some text books state that this stage is called as gurgling or mewling. It also has universal meaning. In this stage a baby practices his or her speech organs.

Stage 3: Babbling

In this period a baby also still practices his or her speech organs. He begins producing syllable such as “mama, dadada, or papapa”. Commonly parents are misunderstood them. They think that their baby tries to call them.

Stage 4: Intonation patterns

In this period a baby tries to imitate intonation patterns. What the baby utters is similar to what his or her mother says. He or she tries to imitate a conversation which sometimes cannot be easily understood by parents.

Stage 5: One-word utterances

In this period a baby tries to utter one word utterance. A baby in this stage commonly acquires up to fifty words depends on the situations.

Stage 6: Two-word utterances

The most prominent development in this period is a two a half years child can acquire hundreds of words. In addition she or he begins uttering two words which are similar to a message in a telegram. It means only important word uttered by him or her. For example “want milk “, it means grammatically “I want a glass of milk” or “I want to drink milk”.

Stage 7: Inflectional words

In this period, a child gradually utters words which are regarded unimportant. He or she starts uttering inflectional word such as noun or verb. For example: “I drinking” (Verb continuous) “shoes” (Plural-s).

Stage 8: Negative and Interrogative utterances

In this period, a child tries to utter more complex utterances in form of interrogative and negative utterances. In making interrogative utterances in form of “WH Question” In English is rather complicated because a child must pass three phases to master it perfectly.

First phase

At the age of two, a child tries to utter “WH Question” in the beginning of an interrogative sentence.

For example: “What you playing?” “Where you go?”

Second phase

At the age of two years and for months, a child starts adding auxiliary verbs before verb but it is grammatically still incorrect.

For example: “What you will buy?”

Third phase

Before turning three, a child realizes that the correct pattern of “WH Question” is preceded by question words then afterward followed by auxiliaries, subject or pronoun, and verb.

For example: “what will you buy?”

Beside that a child in this period is able to utter negative utterances for example: “It is not sweet.”

Stage 9: Rare and Complex Constructions

In this period a child impressively acquires language. His or her language skills are continuously improving though it is a little bit slow. The language pattern of children in this period is different from adults. Children in this period still cannot understand the complexity of meaning. This is contrary to adults.

Stage 10: Mature Speech

In this last period the differences of speech toward adults gradually decreased with the increasing age of the child. At puberty the child's language development is already considered to have "completed". In other word the critical period is over.

Finally we can draw conclusion that the language seems to have all the characteristics of behavior which biologically programmed. Further, there are two factors that affect language acquisition: internal and external influences.

Those stages explained above can be summarized that there are only three main stages of first language acquisition. According to Chaer (2015) they are phonological development, syntactic development, and semantic development.

Mechanism in Language Acquisition

In language acquisition, it is generally known that are three mechanisms in the language acquisition. They are presented as follows.

1. Imitation

Imitation or copying, here children are more likely to imitate what's there and witnessed on the environment, in this case the parents or next of kin and the environment is very important.

2. Conditioning, Mechanism

Here children are more conditioned to the environment so that children initially know about what is around them, such as the introduction of the sound of the voice of his master to the introduction of the sound of the meaning of an object Skinner explained in Fatmawati (2015: 72) that the mechanism habituation to speech heard children and are associated with objects or events. Therefore the initial vocabulary that children have is a noun.

3. Social Cognition

In this case the social cognition is strongly related to the process of imitation, because here, children acquire language through meaningful word or directing something, here the process of understanding the semantic cognition already works because he has understood the person of interest in saying anything.

CONCLUSION

FLA deals about how a child acquires his or her mother tongue or first language from he or she was born. There are so many scholars concerning with this topic. Actually dealing with first language acquisition, there are only three most prominent related hypotheses. They are Innateness or nativism, behaviorism, and cognitivism hypothesis. From those three hypotheses the writer regards that the most applicable hypothesis dealing with FLA is innateness hypothesis. This hypothesis explains that a child automatically acquire language because he or she is equipped with a special language

device called LAD (Language Acquisition Device). While the other two theories are more appropriate to explain language learning or SLA.

In fact, basically there are three main process of language acquisition. They are phonological development, syntactical development, and semantic development. However they can be explained more detail as follows. There are ten stages of language development of a child: crying, cooing, babbling, intonation patterns, one-word utterances, two-word utterances, inflectional words, negative and interrogative, rare and complex constructions, and mature speech.

In language acquisition, it is generally known that are three mechanisms in the language acquisition: imitation, conditioning or mechanism, and social cognition.

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