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Language Acquisition (Types of Sentence) of Three to Four Years Old Children (Pemerolehan Bahasa (Jenis Kalimat) pada Anak Usia Tiga-Empat Tahun)

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Abstract: *This study discussed the language acquisition of children aged 3-4 years. In general, children aged three to four years are able to produce various types of sentences to communicate their goals to others. This study aimed to describe what types of sentences are acquired by children aged three to four years. This type of research was qualitative research using the descriptive method. The collection of data in this research utilized recording and note-taking techniques. The data analysis technique used in this study consisted of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of this study indicated that all types of sentences in the form of declarative sentences, interrogative sentences, imperative, and exclamatory sentences can be said by children aged three to four years. Sentences that are often said by children aged three to four years are news sentences (declarative).*

Keywords: *children aged three to four years, language acquisition, syntax*

Abstrak : Penelitian ini membahas tentang pemerolehan bahasa anak usia 3-4 tahun. Pada umumnya anak usia tiga sampai empat tahun sudah mampu menghasilkan berbagai jenis kalimat untuk berkomunikasi menyampaikan tujuannya kepada orang lain. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan jenis kalimat apa saja yang diperoleh anak usia tiga sampai empat tahun. Jenis penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif menggunakan metode deskriptif. Pengumpulan data menggunakan teknik rekam dan catat. Teknik analisis data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini terdiri atas reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa semua jenis kalimat berupa kalimat berita (deklaratif), kalimat tanya (interogatif), kalimat perintah (imperatif), dan kalimat seruan (eksklamatif) sudah dapat diujarkan oleh anak usia tiga sampai empat tahun. Kalimat yang sering diujarkan oleh anak usia tiga sampai empat tahun ini adalah kalimat berita (deklaratif).

Kata Kunci : *anak usia tiga sampai empat tahun, pemerolehan bahasa, sintaksis*



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Introduction

Language is a means of human communication or interaction through the use of signs, such as words, sentences, and movements to convey a thought, idea, concept, or feeling. The role of language is pivotal in human life. Through languages, humans can interact and communicate with each other. Hence, language functions as a tool for humans to express feelings, thoughts, desires, ideas, and concepts. Language is acquired by human beings since born. Generally, young human beings start producing spoken language at the age of 6 weeks old. At the age of 6 months, babies express themselves through increasingly complex chattering until they get their first meaningful word utterance.

The role of language in child development is a great concern to many individuals. It is supported by the idea suggested by Chaer (2003: 167) who stated that language acquisition is the process happening in the brains of children when they acquire their first language or mother tongue. Language acquisition is a process experienced by children to naturally master a language when learning their mother tongue, so they are able to produce, use and understand a particular language. Maksan (1993 in Dwi Yuniarsih 2013) said that language acquisition is the process of acquiring a language through unconscious, implicit, and informal ways. Implicit means that language acquisition takes place unconsciously and unintentionally, while informal means that language acquisition occurs naturally without a pre-determined time and place. It automatically happens when children communicate with the people around them.

Language acquisition by children tends to focus more on the communication

function than language form. It is the development of integrated language components, which starts from simple one-word utterances to more complex word structures. As the children grow up, the development of language acquisition will continue to increase. Three to four years of age are the period during which children start producing complex sentences from the perspectives of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Language acquisition in the form of words in children occurs gradually. First, the words will be uttered by a child without any meaning and at a later stage, they will speak meaningful words. After acquiring a few words, children begin to speak in complete sentences using different intonations. The ability to use intonation in speaking implies that children are able to distinguish the meaning of the sentences they produce.

A number of studies on language acquisition have been previously carried out. Bawamenewi, Arozatulo (2020) conducted research entitled *Pemerolehan Bahasa Anak Usia Tiga Tahun Pada Tataran Fonologi: Analisis Psikolinguistik*. It focused on the language acquisition of three-year-old children at the phonological level. Meanwhile, this current study focused more on the acquisition of syntax (types of sentences) in children aged three to four years. The similarity lies in the area of language acquisition in three-year-old children.

Alwi, et al (2003:336) said that based on the syntactic form, sentences can be divided into four types, they are declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamative sentences. Referring to this theory, this study specifically focused on four types of sentences, which are

declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamative sentences.

The subject of this research was a 3.5 years old toddler. Based on the observation conducted by the researcher, the subject had been able to speak well since he was 2 years old. When talking to other people, the subject was able to pronounce words clearly and fluently. Moreover, he could produce either simple or compound sentences. In addition, the subject could join a dialogue with an adult. The result was similar to the report of the research by Samaya, Doni (2017) who stated that children aged 2-3 years are able to make clear utterances since they are supported by both internal and external factors in language acquisition.

Based on the description above, this study aimed to obtain information on the language acquisition of children aged three to four years and describe language acquisition in terms of the types of sentences acquired by children aged three to four years. Therefore, the researcher conducted a study focusing on language acquisition (types of sentences) for children at the ages of three to four years.

Research Method

Qualitative research using the descriptive method was applied in this study. Bogdan and Taylor in Moleong (2005) said that qualitative research is a research procedure that generates descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words obtained from the participants and their observed behaviors.

According to Moleong (2005:6), qualitative research is a type of study that produces analytical procedures where no statistical analysis procedures or other quantification methods are used. The

qualitative approach is to examine a phenomenon in-depth and to understand what is experienced by the research subject. Therefore, this type of qualitative research would provide support to achieve the goals of the study.

This current research described the language acquisition by children in terms of sentence types. Hence, the method used was the descriptive method. The descriptive method aims to describe, illustrate, and explain the data being investigated in factual, measurable, and systematic ways. Data collection was carried out using interview, recording, and note-taking techniques. To test the validity of the data source, the triangulation technique of data source was applied through taking notes or writing. There were three stages of data analysis in this study, they were data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion.

Results and Discussion

From the results of the data collected, the researcher revealed the language acquisition in terms of four types of sentences produced by three to four-year children, they are declarative sentence, interrogative sentence, imperative sentence, and exclamative sentence. According to Keraf (1982), a single sentence semantically consists of four types of sentences: declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamative sentences. Based on the data in this study, there were found as many as 123 sentences. Classified based on the types of sentences, there were four types of sentences found: declarative sentences with 53 sentences, interrogative sentences with 29 sentences, imperative sentences with 30 sentences, and exclamative sentences with 11 sentences.

Declarative Sentence

A declarative sentence is used to express an event experienced by a person. It aims to describe or provide information from one or multiple events. Kridalaksana (1993) called this type of sentence a declarative sentence, which refers to the expression of stating or reporting something in written form and is marked with a full stop.

There were 53 declarative sentences found in this study. The following is an example of a declarative sentence produced by the subject: "*Adek, beres-beres dulu.*" (*I will clean up first*). The sentence was spoken by the child when he was invited to go out by his brother. It means that the child told his brother that he wanted to tidy up his toys first and then he would go with him. Another example of the data was as follows: "*Idak ado dek rusakan bombom ni.*" (*I did not break this (toy) car*). The sentence was said when the child was playing toy car with his older sister. The sentence was said by the child to tell his older sister that he did not break the car. The other example of a declarative sentence was as follow: "*Dek, idak ndak baju ni, jelek.*" (*I do not like these clothes, it is ugly*). This sentence was expressed when the child wanted to wear clothes after bathing, but his parents chose the ones that he did not like very much. From the three examples of sentences above, it can be said that children are able to pronounce declarative sentences quite well.

Interrogative Sentence

Interrogative sentences are used to express questions using question words (who, what, where, when, why, which, and how). An interrogative sentence is produced by paying attention to intonation and question marks.

Keraf (1982) classified interrogative sentences based on their characteristics, which are as follows: (a) To ask about a particular thing: what, for what, about what; (b) To ask about people: who, with whom, for whom; (c) To ask about number or amount: how many/much; (d) To ask about choices: which, which one; (e) To ask about a place: where, to where, from where; (f) To ask about temporal: if, when, while, if; and (g) To ask about causality: why, what cause, what effect.

From the results of the study, there were 29 interrogative sentences consisting of 2 sentences asking questions about people. The following is an example of the interrogative sentence: "*Punya siapa ni, mama?*" (*Whose is this, mama?*) In this sentence, the child asked his parents who bought the toy gun. The interrogative sentence asking about things consists of 17 sentences, one of the examples was: "*Mama buat apo?*" (*Mama, what are you making?*) This sentence was said when a child asked his mother about what she was doing. The interrogative sentence asking the place consists of 4 sentences, one of them was: "*Dimano mama beli jajanan ni?*" (*Where did you buy the snack?*) The utterance means that the child asked his parents where to buy the snack that his parents bought him. The interrogative sentence asking about cause-effect consists of 6 sentences, and one of them is as follows: "*Ngapo Onang rusakan bombom ni?*" (*Why did you break the (toy) car?*) The sentence was said when the child asked his sister why his toy was broken.

The findings in this study demonstrate that children tend to produce interrogative questions when exposed to new things, as evidenced by the discovery of 17 interrogative sentences in asking about things. The main reason for the finding is because the age of 3-4 years is a period of cognitive development for children to get familiar with something new for them.

Imperative Sentences

An imperative sentence is used to command, order, invite, or ask other people to do something. According to Ramlan (2005: 39-43), imperative sentences can be divided into several types based on their structures, they are: (a) Actual Command Sentence; (b) Instruction Sentence; (c) Invitation Sentence; and (d) Prohibition Sentence.

From the results of the data found in this study, there were 30 imperative sentences consisting of 20 actual command sentences. The following is an example of the command sentence: “*Pa, ambik mainan baru tu!*” (*Dad, please take the toy for me*) The sentence was said by the child when he asked his parents to take a new toy from the cupboard. There were 4 sentences of invitation, and one of the examples was: “*Nang, jum main tanah yuk!*” (*Let’s play on the ground*) The child said this sentence when he invited his older sister to play outside. Six prohibition sentences were also found in the research data. One of the examples was: *Jangan tembak adek!* (*Do not shoot me*) The sentence was said when the child was playing gunplay with his older sister. He ordered his older sister not to shoot him. The results of the data found in this study show that children express more actual commanding sentences, as supported by the findings of 20 actual command sentences.

Exclamative Sentences

An exclamative sentence expresses feelings such as anger, admiration, disappointment, happiness, and other feelings. This type of sentence is usually marked with a high intonation in pronunciation and the use of an exclamation mark (!) or a period (.), and

even use the words such as *don’t* or *please* in written form. From the results of the data found in this study, there were 11 exclamative sentences found. The following is one example of an exclamative sentence obtained from the data: “*Uah.....banyak sangat!!*” (*Uah.. it is very abundant*). This sentence expressed feelings of pleasure. This sentence expressed the child’s feeling of great pleasure and amazement towards how many toys his uncle bought him. Another example is: “*Hmm.. enak*” (*Hmm... delicious!*). This sentence expressed the joy when the child tasted the ice cream his parents bought him. The results of the data found in this research show that children speak fewer exclamative sentences, as evidenced by the data found in this research, where there were only 11 sentences related to the exclamation. It implies that children prefer to convey or tell something more often. They also prefer to ask questions than express their feelings.

Table 1. Language acquisition of children aged three-four years based on syntactic forms

No	Declarative Sentence	Interrogative Sentence	Imperative Sentence	Exclamative Sentence
1	53Sentences	29 Sentences	30 Sentences	11 Sentences

Based on the table above, there were four types of sentences identified in this study. The first was the declarative sentence, which was consisted of 53 sentences. This type of sentence was uttered by children aged three to four years more frequently than the others. The interrogative sentences found in this study were 29 sentences, followed by 30

imperative sentences and 11 exclamative sentences. According to Alwi (2003), syntactically, there are four types of sentences, they are declarative, imperative, interrogative, and exclamative sentences. The findings in this study supported the notion above.

In this study, declarative sentences shared the biggest portion in terms of the sentence types produced by the research subject. The results of this study support the previous research conducted by Yulia Eka Salnita, et al (2019), who revealed that declarative sentences were the type of sentence mostly spoken by three-year-old toddlers. The results of the study showed that the research subject expressed himself more on how he felt, what experience he had, and what toys he owned. The results of the study conducted by Yulia (2019) were similar to the findings in this current study. Both of the research showed that children tend to make more expression on giving information or revealing something.

Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion in this study, it can be concluded that children aged three to four years are able to produce declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamative sentences. There are 123 sentences found in this study. In terms of syntactic form, there were four sentences found. First, it was a declarative sentence, which consisted of 53 sentences. It was followed by an interrogative sentence, which consisted of 29 sentences. The third was imperative sentences, which consisted of 30 sentences, and the fourth was exclamative sentences, which consisted of 11 sentences.

Based on the results of the discussion in this study, the researcher

suggests a number of recommendations. First, parents with young children should interact with them more frequently to help them produce more varied sentences. It is also important for the parents to speak properly using correct sentences because children tend to follow the way how their parents speak. Therefore, parents must set a good example in language use. The goal is to help children acquire proficient and well-established language, mainly from a syntactic perspective.

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