TELEGRAPHIC SPEECH: PURPOSES AND SEMANTIC RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This is to study the telegraphic speech produced by twenty two months old baby boy. Not only revealing two-word utterances potentially expressed, but also identifying the variety of purposes and semantic relations of the given utterances would be the case of this inquiry. Since most of researchers share a common view to which children in that stage, not confined to English speaking countries, but worldwide as well, are able to make more sense sentences. It is linguistically characterized by the most essential words, delivered in a very compressed style to get the message across, and even syllable deletion. This current investigation thus plays a significant role to look at how the existing theoretical framework and speaking data are presumably interwoven. Utilizing the observation and note taking techniques, the required data was collected. They allow us to selectively identify the telegraphic speech that the children develop and to guard them from lost. It was one week data collection, undertaken from 19th to 25th March, 2017. The child's play session was a dominant part of the research activities where the data gathered. The study demonstrates that he shows his ability in producing the telegraphic speech with recognized purposes and a variety of semantic relations. Purposes cover request, invitation, information, and imperative. Additionally, semantic relations deal with verb-object and social marker, verb.

Keywords: telegraphic speech, acquisition, utterances

INTRODUCTION

It is typical for children in common to acquire language through steps. Telegraphic speech is a phase of language acquisition infants develop. The notion refers to the way in which children use a very compressed style to get the messages across. Since a common view indicates that telegraphic speech characterizes 18-24 months old babies, children in fact are unique, may show various language development. Therefore, the current study aims to scrutinize the telegraphic speech that is potentially made by a twenty two months baby boy.

Telegraphic speech is two- or three-word utterances that the children produce in around 18 months to 2 years of age (Steinberg, Nagata, & Aline, 2001). In English context, it refers to the terseness and lack of function words such as

tense endings, verb endings, prepositions, conjunction, and articles of the utterances (Matthews, 1996). It can be said that the massage delivered is ungrammatical because omitting one or more elements based on the normal pattern of the sentence occurs. For instance, the subject of the sentence is neglected. The baby may say "eat cake" instead of "I want to eat cake". The sentence is incomplete in terms of syntactical construction but remarkably makes sense to hearers.

This stage is crucial to children to imitate the language from their surroundings. It has been, however, a subject for debate whether the environmental stimulus is essential to children language development or not. Some claim that the speech of parents and others was not considered fundamental in assisting the child to acquire language. McNeill (1966) for instance states that child was innately equipped by a set of templates to acquire the language against to what he can hear from their parents. The stimulus from them can thus insignificantly contribute to the child's responses.

The opposed views believe that stimulus including exposure to language is basic to help children grow their abilities in using the language in a widening social environment (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Parents or primary caregivers therefore play significant role to make it possible. The parentese, the language that the children receive when they are very young becomes a useful source to infants in developing their linguistic skills. Immediacy, concreteness, short sentences and simple structures characterize parentese (Steinberg, Nagata, & Aline, 2001). The immediacy of utterances which is performed by their parents lies on the direct context so that the language usage reflects the closeness between the children's life and their surroundings. Furthermore, the language does not mirror an abstract idea which hinders children to comprehend and later produce the language.

The parents also adjust their language to their audience by having shortened sentences. It can leave the agent of the sentence out or preposition of the sentence out. For example, they said *have fruits* instead of *I have some fruit for you.* The latter sentence seems to be complex grammatically which make more inferences for children to comprehend. It should, however, be highlighted that the parentese is not limited to parents only, but adult-to-child language (ACL), caregiver speech, (Reich, 1986), and child-directed speech (Pine, 1994). Therefore, the language modeling imitated by children can come from a number of sources.

Even though the language received from their parents may have been perceived in different ways, the children store, organize, adapt, assimilate, and accommodate the information for their comprehension (Owens, 1988). This later capitalizes the language production by which it comes along with their characteristics: vocabulary and syntactical modification (Steinberg,

In collecting the data, I utilized direct observation and note taking techniques for a week, undertaken from 19th to 25th March, 2017. The first procedure allows me to get involved directly on the child activities where the utterances that the child spoke occurred. I subsequently noted them down to guard from lost or disregarded. Heavily relying on memory may not be helpful enough as it is too risky to recall the data accurately when needed. For that reason, note taking reduces the mind's work in selecting the storage information so that is effective to analyze.

As soon as the data gathered, identifying and interpreting the pattern of the utterances were made. It was based on the template or table that can be seen from the section of findings and interpretation. Identification involves the columns explaining the numbering of the data, the child's utterances, typical adults' utterances, functions, and semantic relations. The available tables were filled when I identified the telegraphic speech performed. The division of number based on the letter (1a, 1b, 2a, 2b for instance) indicate that the chosen data have the same element in terms of the utterances but distinguished from other element of it. It can be exemplified by the use of the same word of the *verb* of the sentence, but different *object* of the sentence. Other columns follow. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the holophrastic speech was eliminated to stay away from bias.

Furthermore, I interpreted the data to understand comprehensively the child language acquisition by providing further contextual explanation towards the utterances occurred. It is important to detail the speech that the boy delivered as to the readers obtain apparent description of the context of the data. The importance of establishing contexts of the utterances can be exemplified by the presence of pointing to distinguish either the use of the agent or experiencer refers to different purposes; request or imperative. A comprehensive thought may not be well delivered when context was absent. In this stage, the existing theoretical frameworks pertaining to telegraphic speech and the speaking data were examined. The study thus helps to shed light on the sought answers to the problems being investigated.

DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings and is followed by the interpretation of the selected data. A number of telegraphic speeches had been identified during the term and in general, a set of data show three major purposes of the utterances: request, information, and imperative. The data are typical in terms of the patterns which are listed based on the number: 1b and 1b work approximately and 2a and 2b, 3a and 3b, 4a and 4b, 5a and 5b do too. The following table shows the recorded data:

	No	Child's Utterances	Adult's utterances	Purposes	Semantic relations
		(num)pak (ku)da	Saya mau naik	Request	Verb-object

Nagata, & Aline, 2001). The words sometimes involve the main sound structure dominated by a consonant + vowel syllable unit frequently repeated. *Nin-nin* which means *car* exemplifies the vocabulary adjustment. The given illustration also refers to the different representation of the things from the sounds that the infants made. Additionally, grammatical input is often reduced such as the omission of the subject of the sentence. Indeed, these linguistic phenomena illustrate how children perceived the language heard from their parents and produce as a response in many ways.

Remarkable studies demonstrate that alongside with the one-two vocalization production, babies interestingly show the combination of gesture and speech. According to Plataforma SINC (2014), these combinations are deictic gestures (pointing and reaching) with a declarative communicative intention (to inform) more than a commanding intention (to achieve that objects). For instance, the baby points a particular object meaning that they ask their parents to take it for them. Therefore, the argument holds that babies communicate verbally and nonverbally at the same time.

METHODOLOGY

This research was specifically designed to help the investigated linguistic phenomenon apparently described. Qualitative method was thus relevant to its application. Qualitative approach focuses on describing a phenomenon in a deep comprehensive manner (Rhodes, 2014). In other words, instead of presenting statistical or numerical data, the enlightenment of this recent study is wordily facilitated. This fashion is particularly useful in a way how children utter the language is seen not from mathematical point of view, revealing how many or how much the chosen data are; rather, it focuses primarily on the description and explanation of the language development that a child shows.

In regard with the source of the data, the baby boy is twenty two months old living in Bangkalan, East Java, Indonesia. In his age, he is able to produce holophrastic or one word utterance frequently. But two-word utterances also occur as the existing theories accommodate already. The study thus can clarify and or justify the possible agreement among the assisted literature and occurring linguistic data. The issue at hand pertains to the link between ages and child language acquisition and identification and classification of the utterance that the child performed. The latter is deeply concerned with the purposes and semantic relations. They benefit us to have a close look the connection between the speaking data and the existing theories of children language acquisition. In addition to the inquiry of the linkage of the discussed issues, information of the vocabularies typically used is also central to study.

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		(num)pak (ku)da	Saya mau naik	Request	Verb-object

1	a	(ride a horse)	kuda (I want to ride a horse)		
	b	(num)pak (sepe)da (ride a motorcycle)	Saya mau naik sepeda (motor). I want to ride a motorcycle.	Request / information	Verb-object
2	a	Mama, maem Mama, eat.	Mama, saya mau makan / mama makan. I want to eat / I want you (mama) to eat.	Request / imperative	Social marker-verb
	b	Ayah, maem Daddy, eat.	Ayah, saya mau makan / ayah makan (daddy, I want to eat / I want you (daddy) to eat.	Request / imperative	Social marker, verb
3	a	Ayah, (mi)nta (Daddy, I ask (something))	Ayah, saya minta (Daddy, I ask (something)).	Request	Social marker, verb
	b	Mama, (mi)nta (Mom, I ask (something))	Mama, saya minta (mom, I ask (something)).	Request	Social marker, verb
4	a	Ayah, buka (daddy, open)	Ayah, buka (daddy, open!)	Imperative	Social marker, verb
	b	Mama, buka (Mom, open)	Mama, buka (mom, open)	Imperative	Social marker, verb
5	a	Maem iwak (eat fish)	Saya makan iwak (I eat fish)	Information	Verb-object
	b	Maem embek (Feed sheep)	Mari kita ngasih makan kambing (let's feed a sheep)	Invitation	Verb-object

Data, 1a *(num)pak (ku)da)* and 1b *(num)pak (sepe)da)* show that the utterances are simplified grammatically. An element is the same and simultaneously different. The same verb *(num)pak* (ride) was used, both of them experienced the same first syllable deletion. Both data also demonstrate the first and or medial syllable deletion happening on the words, (ku)da (horse) and (sepe)da (motorcycle). The sentences are compressed, omitted the doer or the subject of the sentence. Both sentences show request manner which has the same semantic relations: verb-object. The simplification can be understood as they may occur to adults' utterances or communicative intent, as shown on the above table: 1a will be *I want to ride a horse.* Meanwhile, the 1b will be *I want to ride a motorcycle.*

Regardless the approximation of syntactical construction of the utterances, the other interesting point that can be marked from the spoken sentences is

that how the same last syllables *da* (kuda/horse) and *da* (sepeda/motorcycle) refer to distinguished objects. In addition, the infant is able to use the word in an appropriate context. The first *da* (a horse) was uttered when he enjoyed idle time with his father and he wanted to get on his father's back (with facing down position). On the one hand, the *da* (sepe)da) uttered when he looked at a motorcycle, and might have some motivation to get around by it, or saw his father is on the motorcycle. Both uses are relevant syntactically and semantically.

Furthermore, data 2a and 2b, *mama, maem,* and *ayah, maem* also demonstrate such telegraphic speech of the baby. Both utterances are typical due to sentence construction: verb available only. *Mama* and *ayah,* as punctuation comma (,) presents, serve such social marker; indicate the blood relationship between child and his parents. The subject and object of the sentences are absent. It can be modified as adult-like utterance to be "Mom / daddy, I want to eat.", or "Mom / daddy, I want you to eat.". Therefore, the utterances can be understood to have two purposes: request and imperative.

Contextually, data 2a and 2b carry different meaning or purposes. The first means that the baby wants to have some food and ask them to his parents. Meanwhile, the baby wants his mom or his dad to have some food. What make two utterances different are the utterance functions as request when no pointing comes along. In contrast, the expression signifies the *imperative* when the baby, while uttering, simultaneously points his parents and typically points their mouth.

Mama, maem (mom, eat) functions to request that he wants to have some food. On the one hand, the utterance indicates such imperative; the speaker wishes someone to do something. The baby wants his mom to have some food. What utterance differs is the presence of *pointing*. When he points his mom, meaning that he wants her mother to have some foods (imperative). If pointing is absent, it is understandable that he may be hungry as to he wants his mother to provide some food (request).

The analysis is also applicable to the data 2b. In terms of the purposes, the utterance functions to indicate the request. His dad was required to provide some foods if pointing presents (he points his dad). It means that he wishes to have some foods if no pointing shown. It can be also noted that the utterances, 2a and 2b are alike due to semantic relations; social marker, verb.

Data 3 *(Ayah/mama (mi)nta,* a and b, show such a remarkable telegraphic speech as well. In this context, request performed. Data 2 and 3 are alike in terms of syntactical construction. The semantic relation that can be explained from the data is the presence of social marker and verb. Meanwhile, the communicative intent is likely to be *Ayah, saya minta (sesuatu)* and *Mama, saya minta (seusatu).*

3a shows that he wishes to have something from their parents, either his daddy or mom. During this study undertaken, the baby normally asks for something from their parents when he knows that they have something such as fruits on their hand. Assembling with his utterance, he points (something) that he wants to have. In many occasions, their baby also asked them to take some snacks above refrigerator (in most cases, his parents just met what he needs, but not allowed him to consume). It has proven the effective communication among the baby with their parents.

Furthermore, data 4a and 4b *(Ayah/Mama,buka / Daddy/Mom, open)* show a certain degree of the importance to which the baby needs immediate attention from their parents. In other words, what he wants should be directly noticed and met. Compared to the previous analyzed data, this utterance is so particular because the utterance is almost perfect grammatically. The form of imperative is clearly stated: *buka* (open). This thus leads to semantic relations can be easily identified: social marker, verb.

The expression of this imperative normally declared to show some objects: opening refrigerator, cupboard, and door. Not to mention what inside of the refrigerator is, he sometimes likes to play with stuff in it: arranging or make them even more disordered. It is supposed to be normal to say that he likes something icy as he looks so cheerful to play with snow from the freezer. Additionally, when the door closed, he asked either his daddy or mom to open the door. Based on the investigation, he did it either just to meet his pleasure when having the door open and close repeatedly or to get out from the common room. He wanted to get around in the front yard of the house. Moreover, he asked his parent(s) to have the cupboard open normally after taking bath. He would like to make such personal decision to what cloth that he would like to get dressed. To get his goal, he either asked a help to take or pointed the intended cloth for service. Those are intelligible for both baby and caregivers.

Interestingly, data 5, a (maem iwak) in which the communicative intent is likely to *Saya makan iwak (I eat fish)* and b (maem embek) *(Mari kita ngasih makan kambing (let's feed a sheep)),* show such distinguished expression when we looked at them from semantic relational aspect. They show verb-object which are not found from the previous data. The expression is content words only. Meanwhile, the purpose of the utterances seems to be going to a different direction. Datum 5a tends to be providing information and datum 5b, however, is invitation.

5a occurred when ones such as his grandparents asked him what he had for dinner. *"maem apa?",* asked his grandfather. *Maem iwak* (eat fish), he replied. The conversation took place on the phone. Additionally, 5b shows another interesting data. When looking at the semantic relational aspect of

the utterance, they seem to be similar. It means that the (eliminated) subject eats sheep. The fact is that the verb (maem) cannot be literally translated as *eat,* but indeed, *feed.* It sounds odd to have the first translation (eat) used to comprehend the given utterance while in fact, he, or most of normal people, does not eat sheep.

The analyzed data demonstrate a number of facts relating to telegraphic speech; the communicative intents, purposes, and semantic relation. From the analysis, we can point out that the existing theories are in line with the speaking data:18-24 months old babies show their ability to perform telegraphic speech, speech encompasses content words only or is simplified grammatically. The vocabularies used are also typical to his every day needs, the language that is daily exposed to him. Reinforcement works.

CONCLUSION

Telegraphic speech is a stage where children aged 18-24 months show growth in language by two-three words. It has been characterized by the simplification of the grammar such as omitting the subject of the sentence or compressed style to get the messages across by having the content words only to how children acquire the language. The utterances, however, make sense to hearers. The act has been evidently shown by the infant.

The analysis shows a number of facts related to the purposes and the semantic relations of the given utterances. Request, information, imperative, and invitation exemplify the comprehensive information of what ideas the baby tried to deliver. Moreover, the semantic relations also vary: verb-object and social marker – verb. In addition to them, the vocabularies used indicate the intimacy between daily needs and the language modeling provided from their parents. The infant is only able to produce the language from what they have heard and imitate them for occasional purposes. The current investigation is also in line with the existing point of views to children language acquisition in a certain period of time.

This study can act as a platform for further research. The length of the data collection and the source of the data could be wisely considered as to comparison that makes potential unexpected data contributing to overlapping between the theories of children language acquisition and the chosen data anticipated. Meanwhile, it offers great opportunities to look at different perspectives on different circumstances of the children to approach the issue under discussion. Indeed, it can lead to other ways in understanding to how babies acquire the language.

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