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Child Language Acquisition Focusing On Bilingualism

Ng Yu Jin[1]

[1] Universiti Tenaga Nasional

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Abstract

Language acquisition is an amazing process which had always intrigued everyone. Children at a very young age have been able to learn words and then turn them into meaningful sentences. Linguists, of course have been fascinated by this extraordinary feat of a child to have acquired such complex structures of a language. To explain child language acquisition, three theories have emerged. They are the behaviourist theory, the innatist or cognitivist (here -on - after will be referred to as the innatist theory) and the interactionist theory. Out of these three theories, the innatist theory is the most widely supported and is the most logical in explaining the acquisition of the complexity of a language. This research therefore aims to determine if the language acquisition process of a bilingual child corresponds with the innatist theories of child language acquisition. ChildLanguage Acquisition Focusing On Bilingualism Strictly as per the complia nce and regulations of : The research questions that this study will attempt to answer are : I. Is the language acquisition process of a child universal? II. Is child language acquisition innate?

Index terms— extraordinary, cognitivis, acquired

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1 INTRODUCTION

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2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Skinner, a psychologist, was the first to aggressively put forth a theory of language acquisition back in 1957. Through his book "Classic Behaviour" he posited that humans are born with only blank slates and thus have no internal processing whatsoever when it comes to language (cited in **??**rown 2000:22). Language learning is therefore the result of imitation, practice, feedback on success, and habit formation **??**Lightbown & Spada 1999:9). Humans are stimulated to acquire language by the use of rewards. This theory however, had been widely criticized as research have found that the rate of imitation in a child is usually less than 10% and that children do not imitate everything they hear **??**Lightbown & Spada 1999:11). Ervin (cited in Predestinate Grooves:74) in her study also found that children produced imitations which were less complex than their spontaneous sentences. In short, the behaviourist theory has failed to explain how novel utterances came about and why children continue to develop complex language structures despite their already having been met and that "language develops long before children need to communicate in order to survive" (cited in Predestinate Grooves:67).

Lenneberg, in his innatist theory opined that language is species specific where only humans have a complex structure of symbols called language (cited in **??**rown 2000:24). Chomsky, the most progressive proponent of the innatist theory (cited in **??**rown 2000:24) similarly claimed back in 1965 that language is an innate skill where children are born biologically programmed for language. According to him, children have a special biological ability to discover linguistic rules of a language system. He called this innate skill, the "little black box" as the Language Acquisition Device or in short, the LAD. McNeill (cited in Brown 2000:24) listed four innate linguistic properties of LAD which are the ability to distinguish speech sounds from other sounds in the environment, the ability to organize linguistic data into classes, the knowledge of which linguistic systems are possible and the ability to evaluate the linguistic input to come up with the simplest possible linguistic system. Chomsky (cited in Lightbown & Spada 1999:16) later called this innate skill Universal Grammar implying that all children are endowed with a set of linguistic principles that apply to all languages around the world, thus the name "universal". He further claimed that children are born pre-wired with a number of possible options of language to use and once exposed to limited specimen of the language, they automatically know how that language works-they are "switched on" to that language (cited in A Blueprint In The Brain:103).

The beginning of true language is said to emerge when children produce 2-word utterances (cited in Predestinate Grooves:68). Braine in 1963 (cited in Chattering Children:115) analyzed 2-word utterances of three 2-year old children and found that there is a pattern which the children adhere to when coming up with 2-word utterances. From his findings, he developed the principle of "pivot grammar" where one word would come from the pivot class and the other from the open class. Words in the pivot class are not many but occur frequently and they are words such as MORE, THIS and NO. The open class words occur less frequently but the quantity is significantly higher than the pivot class.

Words in the open class are usually nouns such as MILK, SHOE and BUNNY. However, this principle was abandoned when it was uncovered that not all children L actually occur in one utterance. His finding however, was a good start to proving that grammar is universal. Another person who did a study on 2-word utterances was Bloom who in 1970 (cited in Chattering Children:117) found that 2-word utterances are actually structured and rule-governed. She discovered that whenever a child expresses relationships of locations, possession and subject-order, it does it in the same way as adults would where an object or subject is uttered first before the location while the possessor is placed before the possession. This signified that a child knows that a language has patterns which are regular. Another finding from studies of 2-word utterances was that there exists "minimal two-term relationships" where children express semantic meanings in a similar fashion of word order. The most referred list was that of Brown's (cited in Chattering Children:120).

An important aspect to point out about the innatist theory is that it is believed that a child's language is systematic where the child is constantly forming hypotheses, tests them and then revises, reshapes or abandons them. If a hypothesis is retained, the hypothesis is then internalized by the child. If a hypothesis is inadequate, they formulate a new hypothesis until they have come up with a set of linguistic principles that can cater for all possible sequences of the language they are acquiring (cited in A Blueprint In The Brain:93). This process of hypotheses testing continues as language is being acquired. The child's utterances while going through the hypotheses testing process are called "groping patterns" (Braine cited in Chattering Children:119).

The third theory, the interactionist theory opines that language acquisition is a product of complex interaction of the child's linguistic environment and the child's internal mechanism **??**Lightbown & Spada 1999:22). Thus, modified verbal language, also called "motherese" is deemed to be crucial in language acquisition. This theory however, is contradicted as research have found that children who are not exposed to "motherese" still develop language eventually with little variation in speed and sequence as was found in a town called Tracton where children of a working-class black community still acquire language efficiently eventhough interaction with adults is rarely existent (cited in Puzzling It Out:151).

As mentioned earlier in the introductory section, out of these three theories, the innatist theory is the most plausible to explain the acquisition of complex grammar in a child **??**Lightbown & Spada 1999:26). This theory is further supported by **??**rain and Thornton (1999:9) where they have identified three hallmarks to prove innateness. Firstly, children adhere to linguistic principles which have no corresponding evidence in the environment. Children utter "goed" and "comed" often when no adults have ever uttered these words in their environment. This lack of corresponding evidence is called "negative evidence" and sometimes also called "the poverty of stimulus"

??Crain & Thronton 1999:19-20). The second hallmark is that linguistic principles are universal, manifested by all children learning language. Thus, there has been little variation in the acquisition sequence of children across languages. How could this be if not for innateness? Finally, the third hallmark is that the highly complex linguistic principles appear early in a child's life. It is impossible for a child to have "learnt" such complex structures from the environment so early in its life. Thus, a child must have an innate language capability.

In studying the innateness of language acquisition, Crain and Thornton opined that a child is a good testing ground for proving innateness. This is because the early emergence of linguistic principles in the language spoken by the child proves innateness ??Crain & Thornton 1999:10). As an expansion of this opinion, a bilingual child is also a good testing ground for proving innateness as evidence have shown that when "simultaneous bilinguals" are in contact with both languages in their environment, they will still progress in the same rate and manner as if they were monolinguals ??Lightbown & Spada 1999:3). Simultaneous bilinguals are those who are exposed to both languages since birth, similar to compound bilinguals who are those who use both languages at the same time while a coordinate bilingual is someone who uses different languages at different times for different purposes. Therefore, to find universal language principles, one should study the speech patterns of simultaneous and compound bilinguals. In studying bilingualism, it is imperative to know the two theories that are frequently used to explain the systems of thought of a bilingual. The first is the Sapir-Whorfian theory of linguistic relativity where language shapes thought ??Kramsch 1998:11). Therefore a bilingual child is expected to have two systems of thought (cited from lecture notes). The second theory is the Vygotsky's theory of cultural relativity where language is deemed as a tool to transmit culture and knowledge (cited from lecture note). Thus, a bilingual child is expected to use different languages for different purposes, depending on the language that was used to transmit certain cultures. One example is if the English language is frequently used by a mother to reprimand a child, the child would tend to use English when speaking in a stern fashion to his friends. Other researches on bilingualism have shown that children use language as an interdependent system where knowledge that is acquired in one language readily transfers to the other (cited from lecture note).

3 III.

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Since the data that was required for this research were authentic utterances of a particular child and that these utterances needed to be elicited with followed this pattern as two open class words can Child Language Acquisition Focusing On Bilingualism minimal interruptions, an ethnography of communication was adopted as a means to conduct the research. The Global Journal of Human Social Science Volume XI Issue IX Version I sample is one child, a 3,7 bilingual child. A bilingual child is chosen because as stated earlier a bilingual child is a good testing ground for proving innateness as the early emergence of certain linguistic principles can prove innateness. The child's mother is of Malay and Chinese parentage who is a fulltime homemaker. She speaks Malay dominantly and uses English when giving her son English lessons. These lessons are conducted at least thrice a week. The child's father is a Malay who hails from Singapore. He has a nine-to-five job and speaks a balanced mix of English and Malay. Since the child spends more time with his mother than his father (due to the fact that his mother is a fulltime homemaker), he is exposed to more Malay than English. Thus, the bilingual child's L1 is Malay while his L2 is English. The data collection was done over a period of two days thus is a cross-sectional study. The sample data were divided into two data sets. The data were of a quantitative nature as they were the utterances of the child and the contexts of the utterances. The data were divided into two data sets which were : I. the L1+L2 and L2 utterances of the child II. the contexts of the utterances in listed in II

The method used to elicit data set I was by recording the child's utterance with the use of a microcassette recorder. This method however made the setting very unnatural and thus made the child conscious of himself. The child therefore refused to speak and kept fiddling with the recorder. Throughout the first six hours, only three L1+L2 and L2 utterances were recorded. The researcher then decided to use the observation method. With the microcassette now out of his sight, the child was back to his normal talkative and chirpy self. This attempt proved more successful as nine L1+L2 and L2 utterances were recorded and these were produced in a more natural environment. The nine utterances were recorded in a logbook. As for the contexts of the utterances, all twelve contexts were noted in the logbook. The list of utterances and contexts is included in the Appendix.

On top of the two data sets, background information about the child's exposure to L1 and L2, his daily activities and earlier utterances which were thought to be related to the research were solicited from his parents via interview either through telephone or face to face. One advantage of this research is that the child is a cousin of the researcher. Therefore, the presence of the researcher was not considered intrusive by the child. In addition, it was much easier to get background information and to seek clarifications from his parents whenever the need arises.

The data collected will be analyzed in two aspects. The first aspect is the complexity of notions that are depicted by the utterance. The second aspect

The reason for the analysis of the constituent structure of each utterance is to find out if each utterance adheres to the basic syntactic levels posited by Chomsky in his book Aspects of the Theory of Syntax back in 1965 (cited in Steinberg:98-99). The two syntactic levels are the Deep structure which is the underlying syntactic form of the sentence and the Surface structure which is the actual product or the utterance that originated from a Deep

structure which has been transformed by a rule called the Transformational Rule. The basic syntactic rules of a Deep structure are called Phrase Structures or simply called PS. The PS can exist in many forms which are considered syntactically correct. Those that are relevant to this research are :I. PS ? NP II. IPS? NP + VP III. PS ? NP + AP (NP -Noun Phrase, VP -Verb Phrase, AP -Adjective Phrase)

For ease of analysis, the twelve utterances were divided into three different categories. A few utterances from each category will be analyzed and discussed. They are the ones which are underlined in the categories below : When he was playing with a toy oil tanker, the researcher asked "Bil main apa tu?" which meant "what are you playing?". The child answered "oil the tanker". His intended meaning was "oil tanker".I. Category I -

5 Context and Intended Meaning

Child Language Acquisition Focusing On Bilingualism will be the analysis of the syntactical structure of the utterance which will look into the constituent analysis and the grammatical coherency of the utterance.

When the child uttered "oil the tanker", he was able to identify a concrete object of a certain shape as an "oil the tanker". This showed that he was able to infer

6 Complexity of Notions

7 Global Journal of Human Social Science Volume XI Issue IX Version I

the knowledge he gained from his English lessons where his mother taught him that the object was known as an oil tanker. With the utterance of "the", he was able to identify the dimensions of specific and non-specific by using the definite article **??**Atkinson 1982:124-125). He was also able to inform the researcher that he was playing with the oil tanker, thus showing an ability to make a statement to inform.

8 Syntactical Analysis

The utterance consists of three free morphemes. The constituent structure is of the basic S ? NP where the NP is a compound NP as it has two nouns. "oil" is the first morpheme of the phrase and is correctly placed at the beginning of the utterance. "tanker is the second morpheme of oil tanker but it was incorrectly placed after "oil the". "the" is a definite article to stress a specific object. The grammatically correct location is before "oil". The child had developed a hypothesis that "the" is used for specific objects but he had used it at the wrong location. This went on for three months although his parents tried to correct it. One day, he uttered "oil tanker", finally grasping the concept that oil tanker must be treated as one phrase. The child had abandoned the definite article "the", thus abandoning his hypothesis that "the" needs to be placed between "oil" and "tanker". The abandonment of the use of the definite article "the" by the child is a sign of regression. This regression depicts that language acquisition is not a process of pure practice and imitation (cited in Predestinate Grooves:74) but rather a process of hypotheses formation and testing. The hypothesis testing of the child also confirms Chomsky's opinion that a child is like a linguist faced with an unknown language which he needs to figure out (cited in A Blueprint In The Brain:93).

The child used his prior knowledge or schema to identify the object as an "oil the tanker". There is negative evidence in this utterance as the child was never exposed to the utterance "oil the tanker" in the corrective attempts by his parents did not play a role as the child was innately not ready to abandon his hypothesis. Once he was ready, he automatically abandoned it without being told. Thus, explicit instruction is not a primary factor in child language acquisition as was cited in Predestinate Grooves (70) where it was found that children cannot be trained like parrots and thus repeated corrections are pointless. These facts debunk the behaviourist theory that language is learned through imitation and practice but instead language skill is a pre-programmed skill.

9 Conclusions from this Utterance ii. Nabil naik train penat la

The child uttered this when he was asked by the researcher how his first ever train ride was. His intended meaning when uttering this was "The train ride tired me" or "The train ride was tiring".

10 Context and Intended Meaning

When he said "Nabil", he was able to identify a person, in this case himself as "Nabil". He derived this fact after realizing that everyone responds when a certain name is called and that he is often referred to as "Nabil". The utterance "naik", the L1 equivalent of "went on" displayed his ability to describe an action of being on a train. He also had the ability to describe a vehicle of a certain shape as a "train" when at the train station, his father asked him what vehicle it was. As with utterance 4.1.1, he again had the ability to infer the knowledge he learnt from his English lessons. Although his parents kept telling him that it was a "Komuter", he kept calling it a train, refusing to budge from calling it a train. He was able to identify a certain feeling of fatigue as "penat" the L1 equivalent of "tired" and was also able to identify the source of his tiredness, which was the train ride. With the use of the particle "la", a morpheme found in Malaysian and Singaporean English used to stress meaning

(Kamus Dewan) after the adjective ”penat” he demonstrated an ability to stress the fact that the train ride tired him. The whole utterance depicted his ability to complain about the train ride so that his parents will not attempt to take him on another ride again. Finally, by producing this utterance when asked about his train ride experience, he was able to tell a story thus confirming that children are sociable little animals who need to interact with other humans (cited in Puzzling It Out:143) .

11 Complexity of Notions

Child Language Acquisition Focusing On Bilingualism environment but was able to produce the utterance. The child developed a hypothesis on the usage of the definite article ”the” thus coming up with the novel utterance of ”oil the tanker” but later abandoned it after finding out that it was not adequate. Therefore, the child had yet to understand the meaning of the definite article ”the” although he had used it in his utterance. The

The utterance contains five free morphemes and the sentence structure is in accordance with the basic phrase structure of S ? NP + VP. The proper noun ”Nabil” is correctly placed at the beginning of the utterance. The L2 ”train” is located at the correct L1 syntactical location which is after the verb ”naik”. The L1 adjective and particle ”penat la” are located after the noun ”train” which is not syntactically correct in an L1 sentence structure. The correct L1 syntax is ”Nabil penat la naik train”. However, the child’s utterance is consistent with Lightbown and Spada’s finding that children around the age of 3,* tend to state events in the order of their occurrence (1999:14). The child therefore had developed a hypothesis that events should be stated in its order of occurrence and was testing it. In addition, the particle ”la” was correctly placed at the end of ”penat” stressing the main message of the utterance. The child’s hypothesis testing of the correct usage of the adjective ”penat” and the particle ”la” further confirms that a child is a miniature scientist who constructs increasingly complex hypotheses until he finally has a set of rules to account for all possible sequences of his language (cited in A Blueprint In The Brain).

Since four out of five morphemes are in L1, this child is therefore one who grew up in an environment where the L1 is the dominant language used. The child was able to use his prior knowledge or schema to identify the object ”train”. This is not the result of mere imitation and practice as his parents referred to the train as a Komuter and kept telling him that it was a Komuter. This scenario contradicts with the behaviourist theory that language is acquired through imitation and habit formation. This also confirms the finding that a bilingual child readily transfers knowledge from his L2 to his L1 speech. The child was able to produce a novel utterance using two grammatical systems in one utterance coherently demonstrating that he is a compound bilingual. The child’s acquisition of grammar is consistent with those of other children where his groping patterns while testing his hypothesis showed a similar pattern. This is demonstrated by him stating events according to the order of occurrence. Universal

12 Conclusions from this Utterance iii. ma batepelai ma Context and Intended Meaning

13 Complexity of Notions Syntactical Analysis

The utterance consists of three free morphemes and is consistent with the basic sentence structure of S ? NP thus is grammatically coherent. It is of a compound noun phrase as it has two nouns. Butterfly is pronounced as the novel utterance /b?t?p?laI/ instead of /b?t?flaI/. This is because he had yet to acquire the fricative sound of /f/ and substituted it with the stop sound of /p/. This occurrence is in line with Jakobson’s theory (cited in Atkinson 1982:28) that children’s acquisition of fricatives is later than the acquisition of stop sounds. The child had also applied the CV consonant cluster pattern of the L1 into the L2 CCV consonant cluster as demonstrated by /flaI/?/p?laI/. The semantic meaning of this utterance which is agent Child Language Acquisition Focusing On Bilingualism same pattern and sequence of language development, with little variation. This is proof that language acquisition is innate. The child was in the garden and he saw a butterfly. He looked towards the direction of his mother and produced this utterance. His intended meaning was ”mom, butterfly mom” or ”mom, look at the butterfly mom”. The semantic meaning of this utterance is agent and object where the first morpheme ”ma” is the agent while the second morpheme ”batepelai” is the object (source : Chattering Children:120).

Syntactical Analysis CONSTITUENT STRUCTURE Rule

The child through his utterance ”ma” was able to identify a person, a second person as his mother and that she is referred to as ”ma”. He had the ability to grab his mother’s attention when he called out ”ma” as the first morpheme of the utterance. He was also able to identify an insect of a certain shape and colour as a ”batepelai” thus again, able to infer knowledge from his English lessons into his spontaneous speech. Through the whole utterance, he demonstrated an ability to inform his mother that he saw a butterfly and wanted her to see it too, thus wanting to share the moment with his mother. The final morpheme, ”ma” showed his ability to command attention again when he realized that his mother did not look up when he called out to her the first time ability to produce an utterance in accordance with Brown’s theory of ”minimal two-terms relationship”.

By the production of this utterance, the child was able to use his schema to identify an object and come up with a novel spontaneous speech. He applied the correct phrase structure to come up with a meaningful and

grammatically coherent utterance. The child also applied the phonological rule of L1 to L2 and thus came up with the novel utterance of /b?t?p?laI/. This is proof that language is not the mere result of imitation and practice as there is negative evidence of the utterance /b?t?p?laI/ in his environment. His parents have always pronounced it as /b?t?flaI/. The child's phonological development sequence is in line with that of a child with normal articulatory mechanisms as posited by Jakobson. Therefore the child followed the universal pattern of phonological development. In addition, the word order of the utterance is of agent and object which shows that his developmental sequence is similar to other children. Thus, Universal Grammar does exist in children where there is the same pattern and sequence of language acquisition, with little variation. This is again proof that language acquisition is innate.

14 Conclusions from this Utterance b) CATEGORY II - MAKING REQUESTS i. nak fishball

When having dinner with the whole family, he came to the table and sat next to his mother. He then uttered this to his mother. The intended meaning of his utterance is "mom, I want a fishball". The semantic meaning of this utterance is action and object with the first morpheme "nak" as the action and the second morpheme "fishball" as the object (source : Chattering Children:120).

15 Context and Intended Meaning

Through his utterance "nak", which is an L1 equivalent of "want", he was able to express his desire for something. By saying "fishball" he demonstrated an ability to identify a round, white object as something edible known as a "fishball". The child was also able to differentiate between a "fishball" and a fish, and a ball. This was confirmed by his parents who said that he knows what a ball is and what a fish is. The utterance "nak fishball" showed that he was able to express his hunger and choice of food to satiate his hunger.

16 Complexity of Notions

The utterance consists of one free morpheme and 2 bound morphemes. The bound morphemes are "fish" and "ball". "nak" is the L1 equivalent of "want". This utterance is in line with the pivot grammar theory where a 2-word utterance usually consists of a word from a pivot class in this case "nak" and a word from the open class, in this case "fishball". He also reflected this in his other utterances such as "nak pren prai" and "nak cekelat". His utterance is per the basic syntactical rule of S + V + O and S ? NP + VP. However, the child had omitted the NP, "I" or "Nabil" in this utterance through the Transformational Rule of the deletion of NP thus transforming the sentence's Deep Structure into a Surface Structure. This omission is consistent with the research finding by Valian (cited in Radford et. all 1999:383) that in Child English, children tend to omit the subjects in a main clause. The child had also demonstrated a similarity of grammatical rule with other children where the semantic meaning of this utterance, action and object is in accordance with Brown's theory of "minimal two-terms relationship".

The child grew up in an environment where a fishball is one of the types of food consumed thus confirming Vygotsky's theory of cultural relativity theory. He was able to use two grammatical systems simultaneously in one utterance while maintaining coherence. Thus, he is a compound bilingual. The child was able to express his desire in L1, "nak" for an edible item in L2, "fishball" thus coming up with the novel utterance of "nak fishball". His language development sequence is similar to that of other children where like most children, he omitted the main clause. He had also adopted the word order prevalent in other children which is action and object. Thus there is Universal Grammar which proves that child language acquisition is an innate skill.

17 Conclusions from this Utterance

ii. ma, nak naik car This utterance was produced by the child when he saw the researcher coming out from the bedroom well dressed, slinging a handbag and holding the car

18 Context and Intended Meaning

19 Syntactical Analysis

Global Journal of Human Social Science Volume XI Issue IX Version I can I follow her in the car?" or "mom, can I take a ride in the car?" The utterance was said with a pleading tone.

The child was able to relate the fact that prior to leaving the house, people tend to put on more appropriate or nicer clothes and carry a handbag. He was also able to understand that when a person is holding a car key, that person might be going out for a drive somewhere. Thus, these are the reasons for him asking his mother' permission to follow the researcher. The first morpheme, "ma" showed the ability of the child to identify a person other than himself as his mother and that his mother is referred to as "ma". He was also able to know that in asking permission, the person he should ask is his mother. The pleading tone he used and the fact that he used the short form of mama, "ma" displayed his ability to know that when asking for permission, the rate of success is higher if he pleaded and used "ma" which had a softer effect on his mother. The use of the verb "nak" which

is an L1 equivalent of "want" displayed the boy's ability to express his desire or need to go on a ride in the car. He used the verb "naik" which is an L1 morpheme, signifying his ability to identify an action of getting onto the car or being in the car as "naik". The utterance "car" demonstrated that he was able to identify an object of a certain shape and size as a car. In addition, when he said this utterance, he showed an ability to know that every car has a key. According to his father, he takes his son on a ride in the car every time he comes back from work. Therefore, in relation to Vygotsky's theory of cultural relativity, a car is one of the many prominent things in the child's environment.

20 Complexity of Notions

21 Syntactical Analysis

The utterance consists of four free morphemes out of which, one is an L2 morpheme. The first morpheme, "ma" is a word used by the child to call his mother and grab her attention. Therefore, in analyzing structure. The utterance is in accordance with the basic phrase structure of S ? NP + VP and the basic syntax rule of S + V + O. However, it is of a Surface Structure instead of a Deep Structure as the Transformational rule of the deletion of the NP had been applied. If the NP was not deleted, it would be "Nabil" as in "Nabil nak naik car". The deletion of NP is similar to utterance 4.2.1 where the NP was also deleted. This is in accordance with Valian's finding that in Child English, children tend to omit the main clause (cited in Radford et. all 1999:383). The locations of the verbs "nak" and "naik" and the noun "car" are all at the right locations according to the L1 syntax.

The environment in which the child grew up in is one which recognizes a car as one of the many things prevalent in his life, again confirming the cultural relativity theory. The ability of the child to use two grammatical systems in one utterance while at the same time maintaining coherency shows that he is a compound bilingual. Thus, the child was exposed to and learnt both languages at the same time. The child's novel utterance using both L1 and L2 showed that there is negative evidence in his environment. The deletion of the main clause which is similar to other children is evidence that the developmental sequence of language in a child is similar. The negative evidence and the similarity of developmental sequence signify that there are universal linguistic principles thus proving that child language acquisition is an innate skill.

22 Conclusions from this Utterance

iii. mama ni naughty la ma This utterance was produced when the child's mother chided him for messing up the sofa with bits and pieces of pineapple jam tart. His intended meaning was "mom, you are naughty".

23 Context and Intended Meaning

Through the utterance "ma", the child displayed an ability to identify a second person and that person is his mother whom he calls "ma". He also had the ability to use the complete noun "mama" as the first morpheme to grab his mother's attention. His use of the determiner "ni" which is the L1 equivalent of "this" showed that he was able to stress the noun "mama" to be more specific and again, to get his mother's attention. An important observation is that the child did not use the particle "la" instead at this location although "la" is also used to be more specific and to stress meaning. This displayed the child's ability to deal effectively with the complex language structures despite his young age. With the use of "mama", he also the constituent structure of this utterance, the first morpheme will not be included as a part of the constituent. Only the second, third and fourth morphemes will be analyzed in terms of the constituent displayed knowledge that when scolding someone or when annoyed, the full name "mama" was used instead of "ma" as in "Nabil" instead of "Bil". He had the ability to identify a certain type of behaviour which is irritating as being "naughty" as demonstrated by him labelling his mother "naughty" when he disliked her chiding. The child demonstrated his ability to stress the fact that his mother is "naughty" by using the particle "la" but at the same time was able to soften his utterance by reverting to the shorter noun "ma" when ending his utterance. One interesting point to make is that he utters this phrase whenever his mother is angry with him which will make her laugh and just stop chiding him. Therefore, this child demonstrated an ability o request his mother to stop scolding him but in a subtle and subliminal manner. In this instance, his intended meaning can actually be "mom, please stop scolding me".

24 Complexity of Notions

25 Syntactical Analysis

The utterance consists of five free morphemes, out of which one is an L2 morpheme. The sentence structure is in accordance with the basic structure of S ? NP + AP. The child was able to substitute the L2 equivalent of "nakal", "naughty" at the right location according to an L1 syntax which is after the NP "mama ni". He used the particle "la" as the post modifier to the head of the AP at the right location. This he did to successfully stress meaning to the morpheme "naughty". As demonstrated in utterance 4.1.2, "Nabil naik train penat la", the child had successfully formulated the correct hypothesis of the correct usage of the particle "la" where he did not uttered "la" in every single utterance but only uses it to stress meaning and is able to use it at the correct

location. This demonstrates that the child is able to make the right kind of guesses about the correct usage in his language thus proving that he is equipped with sensible linguistic hunches (cited in Chattering Children:133) which further proves that language is an innate skill. c) CATEGORY III -SAID BEFORE GOING TO SLEEP AT NIGHT i. I love you When he was told by his mother that it was time to sleep, he said "good night" and "sweet dreams" to everyone who was in the living room. When he was asked by the researcher "kena cakap apa lagi?" which when translated to the L2 meant "what else should you say?" he said "I love you". His intended meaning was exactly that of the utterance.

26 Context and Intended Meaning

He was able to identify himself as "I" and a second person, the researcher, as "you". He had the ability to identify a certain feeling of affection towards someone as something called "love". By uttering "I love you", he demonstrated an ability to express that affection to the researcher. Through the sequence by which this utterance was produced, the child displayed knowledge of what should be said after "good night" and "sweet dreams". The whole utterance was in English which however did not really display that the child's L1 is English. Instead, it depicted that the boy's environment was one where affection is expressed in the L2 as confirmed by his mother. This is in line with the Sapir-Whorfian theory that language determines thought where the child's knowledge of the L2 had enabled him to express his deep affection towards the researcher. It is also in accordance with Vygotsky's cultural relativity theory where language is used to transmit to the child the culture of expressing affection which is more prominent in the English culture. Further observations showed that he only utters "I love you" immediately after "good night" and "sweet dreams" to his mother. Thus, he had acquired the ability to express a deep feeling of love towards his mother by being selective in uttering The child was able to combine the L1 and L2 to produce a novel utterance in a syntactically coherent manner. Thus, he is a compound bilingual. He managed to produce the novel utterance despite the poverty of stimulus where he was not exposed to this specimen of data in his environment. This poverty of stimulus confirms Chomsky's concern about "learnability" where he questioned how children could have acquired language when the speech heard by them (inputs) are not as sufficient as their outputs (utterance) if not for a Conclusions from this Utterance pre-ordained knowledge of the language (cited in A Blueprint In The Brain:103). There is also an existence of Universal Grammar as evidenced from the child's ability to use two grammatical systems at one time while being in accordance with the basic phrase structure of S ? NP + AP. These facts depict that the child's utterance was not the product of mere imitation and practice but this phrase. He also says "I love you" to his father and the researcher but only when probed by asking him what else he should say. This utterance consists of three free morphemes, all in the L2. The utterance is in accordance with the basic phrase structure of S ? NP + VP and the basic syntactical structure of S + V + O. Although all morphemes are in L2, it does not depict that English is the dominant language in the boy's environment. Rather, background data showed that in expressing affection, the family uses a lot of L2 as in "I love you" instead of "mama saying Nabil".

27 Complexity of Notions

The utterance of "I love you" automatically after "good night" and "sweet dreams" cannot be attributed to imitation, practice and habit formation. This is because background information from his parents confirmed that they were never persistent in teaching him to say these three phrases every night before going to sleep and they never apprehended him if he did not say them. In this case, repetition acted only as an initiating point for him to produce this utterance. The fact that he does not utter "I love you" to everyone confirms that children only imitate to a certain extent (an average of 10%) and are selective in what they imitate from their environment as they only imitate what they choose to imitate. This fact shows that language is not learned via pure imitation and habit formation. It is instead the child's innate language skill that is at work, guiding the child in what to imitate **??**Lightbown & Spada 1999:11).

28 Conclusions from this Utterance

V.

29 CONCLUSION

The analyses and discussions of the utterances of the child had brought about conclusive evidence to support the theory that there is Universal Grammar and that a child's language acquisition is an innate skill. It is highly apparent from the data analyses that the child's language acquisition process is only minimally dependent on imitation. In the instances that did show a certain extent of imitations, these imitations however adhere to the basic phrase structures posited by Chomsky in almost all his utterances. Those utterances which did not adhere to these structures however were due to reasons that were existent in the groping patterns of other children around the world, displaying uniformity in child language acquisition. This ability to conform to the phrase structures proves that children know the linguistic principles underlying the language they are acquiring. Chomsky (cited in a Blueprint In The Brain) in explaining this fact had this to say, "some general principle of language determines which phrases can be questioned".

The novel utterances of the child using both L1 and L2 proved that there is a poverty of stimulus or negative evidence in his environment for him to have been able to grasp the complex linguistic principles of language. This confirms Crain and Thornton's argument that knowledge of the complex language systems could not have been learnt on the basis of the primary linguistic data and thus all speakers have some innate knowledge of their language (1999:19).

The groping patterns of the child confirmed that he is in a constant mode of hypotheses testing, modifying, retesting and then retaining the hypotheses. When the hypotheses proved insufficient to cover all possible sequences of his language, he then abandoned the hypotheses. In addition, his groping patterns were similar to that of other children his age as demonstrated by the fact that he follows the same phonological and grammatical sequences in developing a complete set of rules for his language. The child used the same universal linguistic principles posited in the innatist theory. According to Chomsky (cited in A Blueprint In The Brain:93) it is these rules that enable children to come up with novel utterances instead of repetitions of their utterances. These are strong evidence that mere imitation and practice do not explain the complexity of language acquisition process. On the contrary, these are proof that there is such a thing called Universal Grammar and that child language acquisition is, in fact, an innate skill, a part of human's genetic endowment. In doing the research, one apparent advantage was that the researcher's L1 is Malay which is also the L1 of the child. Therefore, the researcher was able to understand the child's utterances when he included morphemes from the L1. This made the data analyses more possible especially in determining the semantics underlying each utterance. However, the limitation factor involved in this research was the short only acted as the initiating point to the acquisition of more complex linguistic systems. The child in addition, did not need stimuli to form a habit in acquiring language thus debunking the behaviourist theory that language is learnt via stimuli and response. The child, a compound bilingual with Malay as his L1 and English as his L2 showed that he was able to duration of time to elicit data. Therefore one aspect that can be looked into in further research is the developmental sequence of the child over a longer period time. This can be done by conducting a longitudinal study on the child's speech patterns to unearth more evidence of developmental sequence of the child that is consistent with that of other children. This method of research can, for example find out if the child will eventually be able to produce fricative sounds, [1] [2]

Figure 1:

[3] [4] [5] [6] [7]

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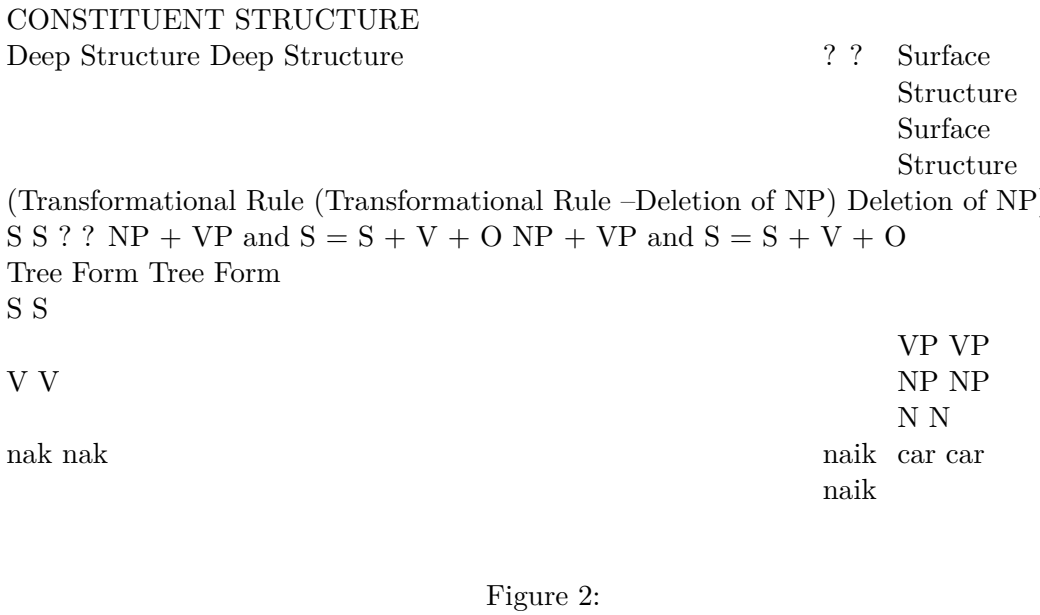
CONSTITUENT STRUCTURE
Deep Structure Deep Structure
? ?
Surface Structure
Surface Structure
(Transformational Rule (Transformational Rule –Deletion of NP) Deletion of NP)
S S ? ? NP + VP and S = S + V + O NP + VP and S = S + V + O
Tree Form Tree Form
S S
VP VP
V V
NP NP
N N
nak nak
naik car car
naik

Figure 2:

whether the child will finally grasp the concept of specific dimensions by a proper understanding of the definite article "the" which he had abandoned as of the time this study was conducted and whether the child will know that it is not a rule for events to be stated in order of occurrence. These findings can additionally support the current body of evidence that the language acquisition skill of a child is innate.

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