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Language learning from children at an early age

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Abstract. Language as an essential factor in human life can be said to be born together with the human. But how does it develop further and how is it acquired by the individual? The issues that will be treated in this paper belong to the psycholinguistic field, a research discipline which is really in the first steps of its development, but considering that without acquisition, language cannot be realized and that its acquisition starts from birth, it turns out to be an interesting issue to be treated. The human with a sound mental and social mechanism acquires language from birth, the first stages of childhood to the age that is considered as the age of almost complete acquisition of language and onwards. In this paper, as well, we will address the topic of speech acquisition by children, who initially use and speak the language as they hear it without their full consciousness, and later to influence to an older age and conscious way in it, by giving it a broader semantic meaning. Regarding the acquisition of speech by children, there are a number of factors that significantly affect children and their speech, from the family, institutional and social background, etc. Therefore, our paper aims to clarify some important issues about language acquisition by children.

Keywords. language, children, social factors, language theory, importance of language care

Definition of language, its origin and character

"Language" is a difficult word to define.

The origin of the language is generally associated with the homo sapiens man, who lived about 250.000 years ago. Traces of this man have been found in Germany's Neanderthal valley; hence the name Neanderthal Man derives from it.

However, some think that it was born together with the human, as a feature of the human race, which in addition to the use of tools separated it from the first monkeys.

In any case, regardless of when the language was born, it is widely accepted that the ability to speak has developed alongside the use of tools.

Given the great role of language in the life of human society, some linguists have come to the conclusion that man lives surrounded not only by the biosphere but also by the psychosphere. This term expresses the fact that man cannot think without language and outside its influence (R. Memushaj:2008).

What is language?

At this point, it may seem natural to say exactly what is meant by "language" but it is actually much more difficult than it seems. Each of us has intuitive or approximate thoughts

related to language; a simple definition could be that language is "a system of symbols and rules that serve us to communicate".

Even Trevor A. Harley thinks that we can describe language in different variants, e.g., we can talk about the sound of the language, the meaning of words, or the grammar that determines which sentences are legitimate. But, an exact definition regarding language is very difficult to give (Trevor A. Harley>2007).

It can be said that language is a social phenomenon inseparable from the daily activity of the human, being the most concrete and most tangible manifestation of our mental life, therefore it constitutes an irreplaceable link to better understand human society itself. It is an important communicative element through which human develops his life activity (:2008).

Meanwhile, academic Gjovalin Shkurtaj emphasizes "as complex and interesting as the issue of language definition, is the way it is acquired by different individuals and especially by children. With the acquisition of language begins a cycle of problems of language socialization, therefore it is necessary to clarify what verbal stimuli children receive, in what way and functions their communicative competence develops"(Gjovalin Shkurtaj:2009). In our opinion, investing in language culture in children is an investment in all disciplines. Piage would say: mathematics and logic are nothing but a side of language specialization.

About language acquisition by children

Many scholars who have systematically conducted observations and studies about children's language have come to the conclusion that the study of speech in young children is by no means a children's deed, as the saying goes for those who deal with it. The acquisition of language structure by children requires dedication and careful and meticulous observations, as the Belgian scholar Antoine Gregoire himself points out in his work "Speech acquisition" that in order to determine the development of language in children it is necessary ' 'to live day by day or hour by hour in the company of children, focusing on every moment of speech and the external manifestations of their activity". Therefore, based on the data determined by researchers on this topic, language development from childhood is considered an important factor, because it is there that the continuous flow of language in the later stages of life is determined.

On the contrary, prominent and world-famous linguists such as Roman Jakobson, Oskar Bloch, Maurice Grammont, etc. emphasize that children's language is an important period for the recognition of the phonetic evolution of human speech in general.

How do children get/understand language? How long does the development period last?

Although there is a development in terms of clear development in the language development period, it is still debatable whether or not separate phases are involved. Are there developmental stages?

Children are not born silent: they make voices growing up, developing from birth, crying, gagging and making sounds by sucking. In the first six weeks, children make almost incomprehensible sounds, and between the sixteenth week and the sixth month they begin to create melodic voices, this includes the production of sounds in the form of sentences where first the vowels appear and then the consonants. Around the age of six or nine months, babies have the impression that they are talking, but they simply make meaningless sounds. Whereas in the ninth month they begin to notice that certain melodic verses occur in certain situations.

Children begin to produce the first words around the age of ten to eleven months, initially from a word, e.g., they first call out the names of the family members they hear because

children initially speak what they hear i.e., they borrow: nanaa, baaba, eta (jeta), Lila (Lira) etc., thinking that they are realizing the language, then around the age of 18 months, a rapid vocabulary development is created in children and during this period two-word sentences appear, e.g., Mami ama, du iq (s'dua fare) etc.

At this stage, children can learn up to forty words a week. Before children produce sentences that are grammatically correct in the adult standard, they produce what is called a telegraphic speech, which contains a number of words but with many missing grammatical elements. As long as the grammatical elements appear, they appear in a balanced way in each language. From the age of two years and six months, the child begins to produce very complex sentences. Language development continues throughout childhood and we never stop learning words (Trevor A. Harley:2007).

The driving forces of language development

What makes language develop? What transforms a non-speaking, non-understanding child into a competent language individual?

One of the most important issues in the study of language development is the extent to which our language skills are natural. There are two different philosophical views on how people acquire knowledge:

Rationalists: (Plato and Descartes) insisted that some certain ideas are natural, they are with us since birth.

Empiricists: (Locke and Hume) opposed or denied this view of natural ideas by insisting that every knowledge is driven by experience.

Locke (1690/1975) was one of the most influential empiricists, he argued that any knowledge held by rationalists to be natural could only be renewed through experience. According to Locke, the mind at birth is "tabula rasa" (blank page of paper), in which events write and determine your behavior in the future.

Meanwhile, behaviorists (who deal with the study of behaviors) also appear as empiricists, because according to them language is completely teachable.

Regarding the question of "what drives the development of language", from the reviewed literature it appears that there are many factors that affect in it. We should consider that language development is a complex process that involves the development of many skills and processes that may be important for syntactic development and less for phonological, semantic, morphological development (Trevor A. Harley:2007).

Speech directed to children

Do babies learn any languages in the womb?

Babies do not start speaking after birth because they need a little exposure to language before they can use it and because other processes (voice perception, vision, brain maturity and social interaction) need to reach a skill level initially. However, the idea that children learn the language even before birth is acceptable, despite that the mother's womb provides a shelter, does not preclude any help from outside. Children can also hear voices from within.

In a study by Decasper and Spence, they asked a group of pregnant women to read aloud a short story every day for the final six weeks of pregnancy. After the children were born, Decasper and Spence tested the babies to verify if they could distinguish the story they had heard before coming to life from another story.

Undoubtedly, it is a hard work to figure out what they want or don't want, and what children can or can't do, because you can't just simply ask a newborn baby, "Have you heard

this story before". Hence, one of the techniques for noticing children's preferences is called unconscious sucking.

Decasper showed that children were more stimulated in this process when they heard the story told before they were born, whether they heard it from their mother or someone else than when they heard a new story. It turns out that children manage to grasp language characteristics even before birth (Trevor A. Harley:2007).

Language acquisition equipment

What can be natural in language?

Chomsky argued that language acquisition should be guided by natural limits, and that language is a separate phenomenon and not dependent on other cognitive, perceptual processes. According to him, children cannot acquire the language only from what they hear, because the language they hear is poor and banal. They get help from the natural structure called the LAD language acquisition device. In Chomsky's later work, LAD was replaced by the idea of a universal vocabulary, this is the theory of rules that enable the child to learn every grammar naturally. For Chomsky, language is not acquired, but it grows (Trevor A. Harley:2007).

Data on the progress of speech development in a normal child from birth to the age of six years old

The speech of normal children (i.e., who do not have organic defects) develops through these stages:

- 1. phase of shouting and stuttering or the so-called babel period,**
- 2. word-sentence phase (or single-word sentences) and**
- 3. connected and complete speech phase.**

Scream phase. Approximately, it includes the first year of the baby's life Both her screams and her stuttering are still devoid of the function of speech, but they have a very important function: to prepare the child's speech apparatus for mastering pronunciation and the fullest possible realization of intonation and everything that has to do with the speech.

Children start screaming from birth, screams themselves represent reflex reactions caused by strong organic demand or need such as; from illness, hunger, thirst, uncomfortable physical condition, etc.

From the beginning of the third month after birth, the baby begins to produce the first stutters. During the stuttering phase, different sounds are heard from the child's mouth, vocal, deaf, hoarse, vowel, consonant such as; **gegii, gugug, dadad, ttatattt. paaappapp**, etc., but we cannot say that they are sounds of speech, they are simply tests or exercises those children do towards the realization of speech (Gjovalin Shkurtaj:2009).

Babbling - are voices that child makes before they speak and that make them look like they are talking. There are two types of babbling:

a) reduced babbling characterized by repetition of vowel and consonant syllables, with the same part but longer e. g.: **bababaaabaa, taaataaaatta, deedddeee**, etc.

b) non-reduced babbling characterized by parts of syllables that are not repeated.

However, we must say that the whole period of stuttering is of great importance for the preparation of the speech apparatus. In other words, stuttering makes it possible to process a range of pronunciation elements, which will then be used permanently in the phonetic system of the mother tongue. Therefore, during the first year of the child's life, although during this

time we hear only screams, meaningless stutters, a series of nodal expressions are formed in it, which are necessary for the subsequent speech.

After this age, in addition to the words *mama* and *baba*, gradually begin to appear more difficult sound complexes, through which the child begins linguistic communication with those who surround him (Gjovalin Shkurtaj:2009).

Communication with words/sentences - has as a feature the enrichment of the passive vocabulary of the child, i.e. he learns and acquires a large stock of words, which he has not yet managed to pronounce clearly and to connect in verses according to a syntactic structure that is intended, and also begins to "swim" a little: to talk to relatives, to ask, to order, etc., e.g. *ama unë* (alb: *më jep mua* or eng: give me), *shash du iq* (alb: *nuk dua fare* or eng: I said I don't want).

Using exactly those words that he has already memorized in "his small but new and ever-growing computer". Thus, a child at the age of two, according to many observations made by linguists and pedagogues from different countries of the world and among us, turns out to have up to 250-300 active words, while as a passive stock, naturally the child already has more words.

Young children (from one to three years old) have extraordinary sensitivities and extremely high predispositions to acquire the pronunciation features of the older adults around them, whether in the family, when playing with friends, in kindergarten or with a nanny.

Also, it is important that parents, relatives, or whoever is entrusted with the care and upbringing of the child, do not imitate "for the sake of" the child's speech, do not communicate with him in "childish" language, but with normal language, as spoken to adults, so that the child always has it as a model, as a sample (Gjovalin Shkurtaj:2009).

During the collection of material for review, we have noticed that children from 1 to 3 years old prefer that adults to speak to them in the language of adults, this makes them more demanding in conversation with parents or others, e.g., / **ade ade pula jeme** // the child does not react, and in cases when he addresses him more seriously, for example // **hajde njëherë te babi** or Eng: **come to daddy once** //, the child becomes more interested.

Related and complete speaking - After turning three, a child usually goes to kindergarten, where an organized and programmed educational work is done. Children's education program in kindergartens predict the development of all aspects of spoken language: vocabulary, grammar system and pronunciation of sounds. Children are divided into groups by their age, which makes it possible for the load of the child's brain to follow exactly an ascending degree, until the complete acquisition of the language is achieved.

While at the age of two the child knows about 250 to 300 words, at the age of three the child knows from 800 to 1000, but until the age of four the child will continue to speak in short sentences and their pronunciation is characterized from deficiencies and various sound exchanges.

From four and five years old is the time when the child grows up and their vocabulary reaches from 1900 to 2000 words. From communication with word/sentence, or very short sentences, the child begins to switch to the use of extended sentences and phrases. Also, his pronunciation improves a lot, sound exchanges and truncated pronunciations are already becoming rarer and not infrequently even completely avoided, for example, children at this age are able to produce extended sentences, but without paying much attention to the syntactic order of the sentence // **ni shok e ni shok e kom tash nshkoll aty** // **i ka qit dityrat nskol u kun i**

ka lexu edhe librat // instead of "tani i kam dy shokë" and "në shkollë ka lexuar dhe i ka bërë detyrat".

At the age of five to six, the child masters a large number of words, reaching up to 2500-3000 words. In the child's speech, not only the expansion is noticed, but also the complexity of the phrase by putting at work even phraseology terms and flexible ways of speaking.

Undoubtedly, knowing these features of the gradual increase of the child's speaking skills is valuable and should be taken into account for the drafting of working programs in kindergartens, as well as for individual work done by family, nannies, relatives, etc., who communicate regularly with the child (Gjovalin Shkurtaç:2009).

"Baby-talk" imitation of codes in parent-child discourse

Child language or as it is called by the English term "baby-talk" presupposes analytical examination of the totality of language tools (lexical, morphological, phonological processes, morphosyntactic processes, formal structures of phrases) which are used by speakers of a certain community to communicate with young children. A large number of linguists have devoted interesting studies to child language, looking at it from different viewpoints.

Some authors have seen it in the approach to the process of speech acquisition by children, such as Jacobson (R. Jacobson, *Aphasia and Children's Language*, 1994).

It can be said that, typically, the situation of child discourse determines the speaker-listener interaction in the following forms: an adult speaks with a small child (3-4 years old) or a newborn; an adult speaks to another adult "kidding" or "playing", such as the communication of lovers (Gjovalin Shkurtaç:2009).

It can be said that the primary function of these variants is to represent the affective connections between the speaker (adult) and the listener-destination (child or newborn) and where the adult has the role and figure of the interactive connection with a child according to proximity behavior modules (Gjovalin Shkurtaç:2009).

From the data recorded in environments with young children, it appears that parents, older siblings and family members in general, use words and phrases in the form of the child language to be closer to the children and their language, in realizing the different needs of children.

Thus, e.g.:

Baki/bakalaqi- i "barku i fëmijës" // t'dhem baki djali mamit, tash ta mush mami bakalaqin //

Doça - "dora e fëmijës" // ta puq mami doçen e vogël //

Ty- ty - "mjet udhëtimi" // hajde me shku tyty, çika ka me shku tyty //

Foka- "flokët e fëmijës" // djali ka me prek fokat // sa të bukura i ke fokët //, etc.

"Adult-child" interaction and social development

We mentioned earlier that during the process of language acquisition by children, several factors influence the development of language, among them the family and social environment in which the child grows up plays an important role.

The socialization process seems to be based on a relationship in which the adult mainly performs the role of the source of stimuli and the interpreter of the child's behaviours-signals, in this way the adult "builds" the communication by treating the child as if he/she were an adult, although he/she has not yet shown signs of speaking (Gjovalin Shkurtaç :2009) For example, children who grow up in an environment with adults manage to acquire speech faster than those

who grow up in an environment surrounded by their peers. Therefore, children growing up in environments with adults are more inclined to use words and expressions, that children growing up in environments with their peers are still uninformed or unfamiliar with those expressions.

The importance of the level of education and residence as social factors

It is already known and also proven (and proven everywhere) that school education and the level of human intellectual training show the kind of linguistic behavior, to a considerable extent (Gjovalin Shkurtaj:2009).

We noted that the child acquires the language in the family circle if the child's parents are educated, they have higher language behaviour competencies, undoubtedly this high level of language also results in the level of language that the child manages to acquire.

During the analysis of such cases, it can be revealed that children who have educated parents, and in particular the mother who has more contact with him, comparing them with their peers who do not have educated parents, the child is more inclined to learn linguistic elements that are more similar to regular speech.

But, regardless of the level of education to which the parents belong, there is also a difference between the language acquisition of those children with employed parents and living in the city, from those who despite their education, are unemployed and live in the countryside, perhaps this difference arises from the fact that educated and non-working parents, by spending all day in an environment where an easier language is used or to call it "gloveless", address the child with the same language elements.

For example, in the first case where the mother works as an educator and communicates with the child in the standard language, we find a higher culture of expression, the child despite the young age of two years and six months uses such expressions // Alb: mami mbylle derën or Eng; mom close the door // Alb: mami të lutem eja or Eng: mom please come // etc., whereas in the second case in which the mother, although educated but unemployed, being influenced by the environment in which she lives, reflects a lower level of speech to the child in the first case, which is around the age of 5 years and 8 months, for example // **kur po shkona ndetje // une thom me mshel deren se qashtu ma kallaj //**

What seems to be interesting is also the way in which children regardless that they do not live in a bilingual situation, playing no role at all in the educational level of the parents, family environment or place of residence, etc., have a good knowledge in the English language. In fact, in some cases they speak it almost better than their mother tongue, it is worth mentioning a researched case, in which we asked him about the colors, the child (aged 2 years and 6 months) would firstly say their names in the language English than in Albanian, for example // Alb: **kjo osht pink** or Eng: **this is pink** // Alb: **kjo osht blue** or Eng: **this is blue** //.

The explanation for these cases can be found in the development factors of digital tools such as: computer, telephone, television, with which children are in contact throughout the day, thus leaving traces in their linguistic elements.

Conclusion

From the reviewed topic and the research done in relation to this paper we can say that language acquisition by children is a process as important and complicated as it is attractive and interesting to study.

What denotes success and result in case research is the step-by-step follow-up of the development of the child's language structure.

The development of language structure in children is characterized by several stages where in each of these children appear with different characteristics and features of language acquisition, they tend to acquire language depending on the circumstances in which they live, family, social circle, institutional etc.

Children make efforts to master the language by expressing their needs through stuttering and shouting that although meaningless, manage to attract the attention of the circle, one-word words and sentences, and complete sentences that they manage to master at the age of six.

According to the achieved results, it turns out that children in the development of their language are also influenced by the educational level of their parents, as we saw in families where children have educated parents, especially mothers, where we find a culture of higher communication than in opposite cases when the parents are uneducated.

Although the issue in question and generally the field to which the topic belongs is still new in its development in our country, it presents an important issue to study it further.

Recommendation

We suggest that parents, especially mothers, to be in contact with their children as much as possible during these stages of language acquisition and show their children as many authentic elements as possible, as well as read descriptive picture books, influencing the acquisition of language in an easier way.

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