

Eight Year Old Arabic Grammatical Acquisition: A Longitudinal Study using MLU's Methode

Ari Khairurrijal Fahmi¹ and Puti Zulharby²

¹Program Doktor Ilmu Pendidikan Bahasa, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Jl Rawamangun Muka, Jakarta, Indonesia / Dosen Pendidikan Bahasa Arab Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof Dr Hamka, Jakarta

²Program Doktor Ilmu Pendidikan Bahasa, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Jl Rawamangun Muka, Jakarta, Indonesia

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Abstract: Children Language Acquisition is one of the applied linguistic studies. The research on language acquisition has been carried out with various methods, one of them is the MLU (mean length of utterance) method. The purpose of the study is to find out the grammar of Arabic which consists of vocabulary, verbs, numbers, nouns, utterances in the form of sentences, and pronouns obtained by eight-year-olds. The method used in this research is descriptive method with longitudinal technique. Data collection uses MLU techniques, interviews, and observation. Data source is a child called Maisa. Data analysis was conducted by reduction, classification, and interpretation. The results of the study showed that children as young as 8 years old acquired the vocabulary of Arabic, and could say short speeches due to environmental factors and self-development factors.

1 INTRODUCTION

The study of Arabic Language is necessary for Moslem people in Indonesia and for Muslims, Arabic is a language that is familiar with everyday life. However, Arabic is a foreign language whose position is still number two after English (Wahab, 2014). In Indonesia, the position of Arabic is still in the first language category which is only taught in schools that are under the auspices of the Ministry of Religion affairs, such as *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (MI), *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (MTs), *Madrasah Aliyah* (MA) and in Islamic boarding schools.

Joel C. Meniado from the University of the Philippines was interested in examining Lebanese language acquisition in three-year-olds. His article titled *First Language Acquisition: A Case Study of Old Lebanese Child* was published in the *Journal of Child Language Acquisition and Development* (doaj.org.id). Language Acquisition notwithstanding being impacted by organic and ecological components, there are a few different contemplations additionally played in getting characteristic language, specifically neurological, psychomotor, psychological, and full of feeling. The development of the piece of his cerebrum that is in charge of the utilization of semantic capacities, the advancement of

his muscles in charge of creating discourse sounds, and the expulsion of his passionate channels that prevent his language securing add to the regular advancement of his first language. Despite the fact that its capacity to get its first language seems natural, its advancement and refinement are formed by the earth. This ecological quality comes as impersonation, rectification and support, similarity, and organized information. Neurological, psychomotor, subjective, and full of feeling improvement can cause postponed language advancement or poor etymological execution/skill. (Kachlicka, Saito, & Tierney, 2019). Knowing how these considerations affect children's language acquisition will help the teacher plan and carry out the lesson well. Because it is also noted that the environment influences the acquisition of the language of the first child, it is very important that both parents (the first teacher of the child) and the school teacher provide a conducive and supportive environment where children can easily acquire and learn the language fully. For instance, schools can embrace and apply instructional method, offices, projects, and understudy focused arrangements. Parents and teachers must also function as grammatically correct models of language so that children can imitate the correct ones.

Other researchers, Hans Strohner and Rudiger Weingarten (1982) from the University of Bielefeld were interested in examining the acquisition of syntax in children. The purpose of their research is to discuss the function of the children's social environment for one aspect of language acquisition, namely, mastery of syntactic regularity. The study was conducted with regard to communication patterns in several children in Germany. The result was the acquisition of the syntactic structure of German in children was influenced by the verbal communication of children with adults. Communication and interaction indirectly make adults follow the syntactic structure in children in order to convey the meaning intended to the child. Language acquisition is a dynamic and complex system that includes at least the specific language involved, cognitive abilities, children's behavior, and children's physical and social environment. Every effort to build a theory in the field of language acquisition must take all these sub-systems, and especially their interactions, into account. Therefore, in the results of this study, they mentioned that the acquisition of syntax in children was obtained from children's interactions that were influenced by the physical and social environment. Children's cognitive development is indeed a prerequisite for acquiring a language system, but this cognitive development itself is very dependent on social interaction with other humans.

Based on the facts above, the problem arises for parents who want their children who are still in elementary school to be able to speak Arabic, even though he did not attend a school that studies Arabic. With this, researchers are interested in examining how the process of acquiring Arabic Language in children aged 8 years.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Language Acquisition in Psycholinguistics

One way that should be considered in language acquisition is information specifically in second language processing or psycholinguistic processing (McLaughlin, Rossman, & McLeod, 1983). In this view, learning a language and understanding a language is not so different, both involve deciphering sound stimuli and linking them to semantic representation.

Competition theory suggests that reinforcing instructions from the first language are carried over to the initial stages of second language processing, at

least, the same instructions are available in the second language. If the instructions that strengthen from the first language and the second language match, this is what will take place in the mind of the learner. But these two things are often not suitable, even though in the same language. English, Italian and Dutch all have animations, positions, and adjustments that act as instructions to show the actors; but if all of this is confronted with each other in the same sentence, then the Englishman will choose a sentence in the first position as a strong clue, in more important animated Italy, and in Dutch the more dominant correspondence. (Gass, 1987; McDonald, 1987; Kilborn&Cooreman, 1987). Second language acquisition can be hampered by the processing tendencies that we import from our native language, and even further into the acquisition of the second language that we display in processing "accents". Further developments can take place in several directions: some speakers of second languages develop systems similar to native language compliant systems, whereas other speakers, especially in social settings, allowing for a lot of code-switching, and developing to use both languages a joint system representing between one language systems from native speakers of both languages. The psycholinguistic process approach to second language acquisition distinguishes between understanding and learning. In the psycholinguistic process approach, learning a second language is like learning the first language unless we start with some more information.

The psycholinguistic processing model emphasizes performance rather than competence, more on strategy than rules. Even native speakers of a language can show alternative patterns of various clues (Harrington, 1987), which state that the nature of native speakers is not a central status in the psycholinguistic model rather than a competency-based model. And that the difference between first language speakers and second languages is not very sharp. There is no proficiency threshold that determines native speakers or perfect two languages because the acquisition of language is considered a process that continues to take place in response to new information in any language.

2.2 Language Environment

Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982, 13-32) see the importance of the language environment in learning foreign languages. They stated that the quality of the language environment greatly determines the success of learning foreign languages. What they mean by the

language environment is everything that learners hear and see in the target language. The environment includes four factors: (1) the nature of the language being heard, (2) the role of the learner in communication, (3) the availability of concrete references, and (4) the person who becomes a foreign language model.

Some studies show that learners who study in a natural environment have better communicative abilities than learners who learn in a formal environment. However, learning in a formal way has a good, especially for adults, who can fulfill curiosity towards a foreign language system. In addition, formal learning can also improve accuracy by applying a foreign language system in communication.

The second factor is the role of learners in communication, which includes three categories: one-way communication, limited two-way communication, and full two-way communication. In one-way communication, learners listen or read foreign languages, but do not respond. Examples are listening to people talking, reading books, watching television, etc. In two-way communication limited learners hear and respond, but the response given is not in a foreign language, maybe in Bahasa Indonesia or non-verbal language. In full two-way communication, learners hear and respond in foreign languages.

Some research conducted shows that one-way communication and limited two-way communication in the early days of foreign language learning have a good effect. Full two-way communication shows its superiority when the learner is ready to speak.

The third factor is the availability of concrete references, namely events or things that can be seen, heard, or felt at the time the event or things are discussed. It is said that communication about concrete things that refer to the here and now makes it easier for learners to understand most of what is spoken in a foreign language. Therefore, concrete references are an important factor in increasing the acquisition of new structures and vocabulary in foreign languages.

The final factor in the macro environment is the people who become models in foreign languages. Around learners, there may be people who can become models, but learners do not use them sometimes. Evidence shows that in model selection, peers are preferred over teachers or parents, and fellow group members are preferred over people outside the group.

2.3 8-year-old-Childrens' Characteristic

The end of childhood lasts from the age of six years until the individual becomes mature. The end of childhood is characterized by conditions that greatly affect the social adjustment of children. Over the past a year or two of childhood there have been prominent physical changes and also changes in attitudes, values, and behavior. During this time children prepare themselves physically and psychologically to enter adolescence.

In Ahmadi's opinion, the characteristics of children aged 6-9 years are as follows: 1) egocentric diminishing, 2) Focused attention on things that are objective (logical rational), 3) diminished fantasy traits, 4) learning period, like to dive into the minds of others, 5) develop conscience, 6) seek freedom in developing social desires (1989: 135).

Children at the age of 8 years usually have reached physical maturity, they have been able to control the body and balance. In addition, the social development of children who are in the early elementary school age, among others, have been able to show their self-awareness about their gender, have started competing with peers, have friends, have been able to share, and are independent.

The emotional development of children aged 8 years, among others, children have been able to express reactions to others, have been able to control emotions, and have begun to learn about right and wrong. For the development of intelligence, early elementary school-age children are shown by their ability to do serialization, group objects, interest in numbers and writing, increase vocabulary, enjoy talking, understand causation and develop an understanding of space and time.

In the spiritual aspect, this period was marked by the rapid development of intelligence. Children want to know everything and think logically. The desire to know and love the truth that is also applied in terms of spirituality. In physical terms, children show activities that lead/aim. Even though he has worked in groups, his attitude is still self-centered. Its activities at this time were not completely spontaneous (itself). During this time the child also sees and asks a lot. The fantasy is alive and always associated with real life. It also appears that children think more logically.

Primary school-age children are at a concrete operational stage. In this age range children begin to show learning behaviors as follows: (1) Start looking at the world objectively, shifting from one aspect of the situation to another in a reflective manner and

looking at the elements simultaneously; (2) Start thinking operationally; (3) Using operational thinking to classify objects; (4) Forming and using connectedness rules, simple scientific principles, and using causal relationships; and (5) Understanding the concept of substance, volume of liquid, length, width, area, and weight (Ahmadi, 1989: 23).

Taking into account the developmental stages of thinking, the learning tendency of primary-school-age children has three characteristics, namely, 1) Concrete, 2) Integrative, and 3) Hierarchical.

Concrete means the learning process moves from concrete things that can be seen, heard, smelled, touched, and tweaked, with an emphasis on the use of the environment as a source of learning. The use of the environment will produce learning processes and outcomes that are more meaningful and valuable, because students are faced with actual events and conditions, natural conditions so that they are more real, more factual, more meaningful, and the truth is more accountable.

Integrative implies that at the age stage, elementary school children see something learned as a whole, they have not been able to sort out concepts from various disciplines, this illustrates a deductive way of thinking that is from general things to part by section.

Hierarchical meaning implies, at the stage of elementary school age, the way children learn to develop starts gradually from simple things to more complex things. In connection with this, it is necessary to consider the logical sequence, the relationship between the material, and the scope of the breadth and depth of the material.

2.4 Mean Length Utterance (MLU)

The number of elements that contain meaning in a sentence uttered by a child can be measured by the mean length of utterance (MLU). MLU is a concept used to measure linguistic products produced by a child. In general, the MLU calculation is done by dividing the morpheme number with the utterance number. That is, the number of speech numbers needed is 50 or 100 main utterances of the child.

The higher the child's MLU, the higher the mastery of the child's language. At this stage of development, the child will recognize one-word sentences, two words, and so on, until the child is able to use complete sentence structure (agent-object-location). Empirically, if children's MLU increases, the form of syntax will also be more complex.

3 METHODS

This study uses descriptive qualitative methods. This study intends to examine the symptoms and events that occur in natural environmental settings as they are more deeply.

The research data are the words and utterances of an 8-year-old child. The source of the data came from direct observation of an 8-year-old child named Maisarah, born on March 13, 2009, currently a third-grade student at Pasia State Elementary School, Bukittinggi. Data collection techniques are carried out by participant observation, where the researcher is the aunt of the subject being studied. Data analysis is done by techniques as in qualitative research, namely by reduction, classification, and interpretation of data that has been collected.

4 FINDING

This research was carried out at the house of the researchers' own siblings in Nagari Pasia, Bukittinggi for 2 weeks. Maisa is a grade 3 student, with her mother's educational background graduating from the Al-Mawaddah Islamic Boarding School in East Java. Maisa's language environment is Minangkabau language and Indonesian. Bukittinggi is a City that is thick with Islamic teachings so that several terms in the Minang language are absorbed from Arabic. Traditions in the Pasia's Village itself, it can be said obliging every child of the age of Maisa to be able to read the Koran accompanied by worship. The majority of children of the age of Maisa have been able to read the Koran well and have been able to read recitation.

The introduction of Arabic has been studied by Maisa since attending Kindergarten continued in Elementary School. The introduction of Arabic in the house was given not every day by Maisa's Mothers call Bunda to Maisa because of her busy schedule at Budi Mulia Kindergarten, Pasia, Bukittinggi. The introduction of Arabic is usually done in relaxed situations, with one-two-word giving and continuing with the introduction of sentences. In a situation like, this it is expected that the child will acquire the language in a natural way. Along with the intellectual and emotional psychological development of children, the introduction of Arabic is done with the addition of media in the form of textbooks and also by using electronic media to further stimulate children's interest in learning Arabic.

From the observations during the data collection process, it can be stated that Maisa has been able to master several Arabic words including the following.

a. Vocabulary

- 1) Pronouns in Arabic (isim dhammir) which include 14 words, namely:

Table 1: Pronouns in Arabic.

He, Him, They	:	هو، هما، هم
She, Her, They	:	هي، هما، هن
You,	:	أنت، انتم، أنتم
You	:	أنت، انتم، أنتن
i, i, we		أنا، نحن

- 2) Number words from 1-10, namely:

واحد، اثنان، ثلاثة، أربعة، خمسة، ستة، سبعة، ثمانية، تسعة، عشرة

Mother: Assalamu'alaikum my child

Maisa: Wa'alaikumsalam, My Mother

Mother: How are you?

Maisa: Alhamdulillah, I'm fine

Mother: What is your name?

Maisa: My name is Maisa. What is your name?

Mother: I'm Melawati. Who is he?

Maisa: He is Ghazali, my younger brother

.....

- 3) Nouns around the house, namely:

Table 2: Nouns around the house.

My Mother	أمي	My Father	أبي
My Brother	أخي	House	بيت
Car	سيارة	Clothes	قميص
Door	باب	Slippers	نعل
Lamp	مصباح	Book	كتاب
Table	مكتب	Television	تلفاز
Bicycle	جوال	Clock	ساعة
Chair	كرسي	Rice	رز

- 4) Verbs, namely:

Table 3: Verbs.

Eating	أكل	Writing	كتب
Sitting	جلس	Working	عمل
Studying	تعلم	Out	خرج
Sleeping	نام	Going	ذهب
Wake Up	قام	Drinking	شرب

b. Utterances in Sentences

The forms of an utterance of Arabic produced by Maisa are obtained from the process of listening and imitating sentence patterns spoken by her mother. These utterances pertain to daily activities that are in accordance with the context of the conversation at home. The forms of speech include:

- Let's play	~ هيا نلعب
- I go to school	~ أنا أذهب إلى المدرسة
- Already father	~ خلاص يا أبي
- This is my book	~ هذا كتابي
- That's your book	~ ذلك كتابك

The form of speech in a short conversation has also been mastered by Maisa, for example, the following conversation.

Bunda : Assalamu'alaikumanakku

Maisa : Wa'alaikumsalam, Bunda

Mother: Assalamu'alaikum my child

Maisa: Wa'alaikumsalam, My Mother

Mother: How are you?

Maisa: Alhamdulillah, I'm fine

Mother: What is your name?

Maisa: My name is Maisa. What is your name?

Mother: I'm Melawati. Who is he?

Maisa: He is Ghazali, my younger brother

الأم : السلام عليكم يا بنتي

ميسره: وعليكم السلام يا أمي

الأم : كيف حالك؟

ميسره: أنا بخير والحمد لله

الأم : ما اسمك يا بنتي

ميسره: اسمي ميسره. وأنت ما اسمك؟

الأم : اسمي ميلواتي. من هو؟

ميسره: هو غزالي، أخي

From the results of learning Arabic, Maisa has also mastered the changes in Arabic verbs based on changes in words instead. The most fluent mastery is the change in the past verb (fi'il madhi). This is because fi'il madhi only undergoes change at the end of the word, the change follow the words instead, whether singular, dual, or plural, and whether the word instead of the third, second, or first person. While in *fi'il mudhari* '(present verb) changes occur at the beginning and end of the word. For this, Maisa hasn't mastered it yet.

Table 4: Changes in Past Verbs Based on Words Instead.

الفعل الماضي	اسم الضمير
فعل	هو
فعلوا	هما
فعلت	هم
فعلت	هي
فعلنا	هما
فعلن	هن
فعلت	أنت
فعلتما	أنتما
فعلتم	أنتم
فعلت	أنت
فعلتما	أنتما
فعلتن	أنتن
فعلت	أنا
فعلنا	نحن

The table above is a pattern (wazan) of changes to the verb based on changes in the substitute words which amount to 14 pieces. These patterns of change have been well mastered by Maisa. This means that if given another verb, Maisa easily pronounces the verb in both past and present forms. Mastery of changes in this verb is important because this concept is not found in Indonesian as the first language of Maisa.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the above research it can be argued that mastery and production of Maisa Arabic as an Eight-year-old child already looks quite good. Most Vocabulary acquired has quite a lot of nouns related to the environment, numbers and verbs (fi'il).

The speech production produced by Maisa is also sufficient for a simple introduction to daily activities, starting to ask about names, news, and some daily activities. At this level, Maisa has not yet been introduced to the grammatical concepts of Arabic because of its complexity, but in terms of the meanings used in accordance with the sentence patterns that should be. This is due to the similarity of the Indonesian and Arabic sentences.

In Maisa's research, knowledge of Arabic was not purely obtained in a language acquisition process like the first language. None of the family and community environment uses Arabic as the language of daily communication. For this reason, it is necessary to have deliberate language teaching actions to make him understand the Arabic language which is still at home. The action of teaching is not the same as learning Arabic in school with one Arabic subject matter in general.

Maisa's mother uses her free time, it can be at night or during the day teaching Arabic to Maisa. Often the introduction of Arabic is done at bedtime or when eating together. In accordance with cognitive development, the process of acquiring and learning language in Maisa is carried out based on the principles of language learning in a concrete, integrative, and hierarchical manner. Concrete means the learning process of Arabic goes from concrete things that can be seen and done with an emphasis on the use of the environment as a source of learning. This is so that the acquisition and learning of Arabic is more meaningful and valuable, according to natural conditions, so that it is more real, more factual, and the truth is more accountable.

Integrative means that Arabic is taught as a whole, they have not been able to sort out concepts from various disciplines, this illustrates a deductive way of thinking that is from general things to section by section. While hierarchical means at this age stage, the way children learn to develop gradually starts from simple things to more complex things. Starting from simple word recognition to complete and complete sentences.

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