

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

4.1 CONCLUSION

Pronunciation is part of language which many parents firstly notice, even when the babies have become toddlers. The most exciting period for most parents is when their children enter the transitional period. During transitional period, babbling sounds gradually disappear and then are transformed into basic words. For the children of this study, the transitional period extends between 0;11 and 1;3.

It seems difficult for children in their second year of life to pronounce words containing trill [r] and lateral [l]. The only liquid which they can pronounce easily is [j] or orthographically symbolized as /y/ in Indonesian language system. And even though they have been able to produce the lateral sound, they still tend to transform it into [y] sound.

We can say that for children of 1;5-1;8, the sounds [j] and [tʃ], or orthographically symbolized as /y/ and /c/ in Indonesian language system, are still the most convenient sounds to pronounce. The production of those sounds involve the upper part of the tongue and the palate, which are easy to reach. The convenience seems to be one rule that they use in pronouncing words.

Children often simplify their utterances. The simplifying process sometimes results in childish pronunciation. They are different from adults' pronunciation, because the consonant clusters are transformed into singletons, diphthongs are transformed into monophthongs, some voiced sounds are transformed into their voiceless forms, and the place of articulation of certain sounds are changed. Vice versa, children may maintain some sounds which are difficult for adults and do not simplify them. In short, pronunciation of children at 1;1 - 2;0 has not been stable yet. The children themselves are not consistent, they pronounce words in the way they like not in the way they are able to produce.

It is found that sometimes consonants are weak in the initial positions but strong in the medial or final positions. This finding is the opposite of a-1971-survey on 100 English children. According to the result of the study, [p], [b], [k], [n], [f], [d], [g], [m], and [h] commonly occur as word-initials (Crystal, 1989:240). The reason of these different findings, I guess, lays on the different rules employed by Indonesian and English language. Different from the English language, stresses in Indonesian language are not prominent linguistic features. These Indonesian children, who acquire their language mostly from their Indonesian family environment, do not learn to put stresses on the first syllables and, therefore, some of their initial consonants are not clear. But when the consonants are in medial and final positions, most of the time they are easily pronounced.

In children's pronunciation, sounds are not made as distinct as in adults's pronunciation. When adults produce certain sounds by fully attaching the necessary articulators, children produce the same sounds by only slightly attaching the necessary articulators. Therefore, the sounds produced are sometimes not clear, just like the sounds which are produced by lazy adults or sick people.

After analysing the data, I conclude that motherese may not reinforce the children to pronounce sounds like adults' pronunciation. Of course, the mothers as the pivot environment for her children may influence their children's pronunciation. A lot of children, when they grow up, speak in the similar way as their mothers. But pronunciation is a language skill that children can learn by themselves, using trial and error method. They prefer convenience in pronouncing words, which ruins the phonological rules applied in adults' pronunciation. The children even combine the adults' pronunciation that they have acquired with babbling sounds -to fill in the seclusion parts of utterances or to enjoy themselves by playing their articulators- as late as 2;0.

Not all mothers tend to adjust their pronunciation to their children's. Some mothers do not even include baby words in their motherese, like the mother of the second dyad of this study. If they do adjust their utterances, the adjustment pertains

to the speed and volume and also the length of the utterances. The changes in motherese are temporary and various from one person to another.

Children's vocabulary consists of basic words referring to people (relatives), actions, clothing, animals, toys, household objects, and social words (/dada/, /bye bye/). More than half of the them are concrete words, but they have acquired some abstracts also. The vocabulary has correlation with the context. The children usually talk about what is going around them, the things which are 'here and now'. The children are able to call things or people which are not visible, but only those which/who are very familiar and become their favorites.

Things which are not familiar, known only through books, usually are context-bound. Context-bound means the words are always used referring to same objects and accompanied with similar behavioral context. Some scholars say that context bound words dominate children's vocabulary but as for two-year-old children, this opinion is not true.

On the other hand, things which belong to the same category but they exist within the children's environment, can be contextually flexible words. I find that children are able to produce words in their contextually flexible usage because motherese helps them. Motherese, which refers to the things which are 'here and now', habituates child B to hear certain terms over and over, and in time it helps the children to realise the context and to use the words in their contextually flexible

position. Motherese also helps to transform the concept of particular objects into their contextually flexible usage.

Deixis does not occur largely in the vocabulary of children below 1;8. Children below 1;8 know the demonstrative pronouns when their mothers use the words, but their realization seems due to the non-linguistic features which accompany the words. It is again the context which plays the significant role. As for children of 1;9 and above, they have started to use deictic words like /sana/ and /atas/, and they also have learned to accompany the words by pointing their fingers.

The vocabulary of children below 2;0 does not include personal pronouns. To replace the position of the personal pronouns, proper names are used. Proper names are used as terms of address, and also as possessive case of nouns to name things which belong to members of the family.

In short, in the acquisition of lexical items, motherese may influence the children's diction, but it does not last permanently. Motherese plays more significant role in introducing the context. As have been mentioned above, motherese helps the children to transform context-bound words into their contextually flexible usage.

Children may use the same words but add different meaning to them. Children may want to imitate motherese but they are not able to do so because their speech devices are immature, they still enjoy using babbling sounds and producing nonsense

words. Children may not imitate motherese because they have their own favorite words. The point is imitating motherese is not a must for children acquiring language.

The utterances formed by children below 2;0 usually consist of one-word utterances (holophrases) or two-word utterances. At the end of the second year, the children are able to produce relatively longer utterances, usually about 4 words, but they do not utter them continuously. Rather, there are slight pauses between the words.

Especially for holophrases, the children may use one word for many purposes. The same word can be used to give statement or command, or just used for fun (the utterance has no intention other than enjoying the sounds). However, not once I notice the children of this study use questions even though they know the meaning of questions given by their mothers.

As for children below 1;8, they are only able to produce sentences/utterances of 3 words at maximum. But based on the observation of the children of this study, music helps them to produce utterances longer than 3 words (even though there are also some babbling sounds involved). It is easier for them to memorize the falling and raising of utterances using the rhyme of music than to memorize the words of normal utterances.

Motherese mostly consists of questions and commands. Dealing with these functional utterances, children seem to realise what are expected from them because

most of the time they know how to give appropriate response. Children as old as 1;8 have known how to give approval when they are asked. We can say that motherese helps children to respond questions, but in this study there is no indication that motherese helps the children to produce questions even as old as 2;0.

The acquisition of discourse skills is much influenced by mothers. In the acquisition of other language abilities, such as pronunciation, the children get the opportunity to do trial and error when they are alone. On the contrary, the acquisition of discourse skills is accomplished only within the communication with other people.

Motherese teaches children how to satisfy other people by giving expected answers. Children learn to deal with adjacency pairs accompanied by certain facial expressions from the reactions given by the mothers. The children of this study are taught by their parents to tolerate other people when they are talking. This treatment results in the children's capacity to listen to other people even though only for a relatively short time (compared with adults' ability to tolerate other people's speeches), because children get bored easily.

4.2 SUGGESTIONS

My research shows that children can produce lengthy utterances when they sing. I suggest that parents using songs to elicit their children producing lengthy utterances. Songs can help the children to accelerate their language development.

To introduce new vocabulary, parents should introduce the words in groups based on the context. The words which belong to the same context/environment can be introduced altogether. It eases the children to understand the semantic concepts of the objects because children learn things through their context.

In parents and child communication, I suggest the parents providing their children with useful feedback. Some parents care the proposition (or the truth) of their children's utterances more than the way children deal with other people's utterances. I think, for children, expressing thought is more important than just merely telling the right things. Parents can manipulate motherese to encourage their children uttering their thought.

In my opinion, children have to be encouraged to acquire discourse skills as soon as possible. In this study, I observe that children who get maximum opportunity to interact with other people during their early childhood and receive more reinforcement and evaluation, get more advantages than the children who hardly ever receive evaluation. The second group find difficulties when they have to tolerate other people's speeches. Those children ultimately suffer in social interaction, just because they have never learned how to talk with other people properly during their early childhood.

BIBLIOGRAPHY