

First language development on children: the literature review analysis

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Abstract

This article aims to observe how children acquire and develop their first language. Most theories agree that children acquire their language through several steps. They are the pre-linguistic, babbling, one-word, two-word, telegraphic, and multi-word stages. This research used literature review analysis to explore the detailed explanation of first language development in children. It is based on the theory of behaviorists, nativists, and interactionists. Behaviorists explained that language is learned through environmental conditioning and imitation of an adult's model. Nativists say that language is native, natural, and innate to human beings. Every child is born with a 'built-in' device for acquiring language. Meanwhile, interactionists say that language is a product of both genetic and environmental factors. This research contributed to the understanding of the first and second language development for children. It can be used to overview the second language learning.

Keywords: Language Development, Children's Language, Literature review

INTRODUCTION

Language is the utilization of sound or signs and also is defined as systematically and conventionally written symbols for communication or self-expression. Language refers to a form of communication in which individuals learn to employ complex rules to construct and manipulate symbols, be they words or bodily movements, that yield meaningful sentences in an unlimited quantity (Sentosa & Apriliani, 2018). Language serves as a communication tool in everyday interactions, with oral language being the most frequently employed (Friska & Syafi'i, 2021). It is used to convey intentions to others through the arrangement of words that are easily comprehensible. Hence, for the clear conveyance of intentions, the accurate use of language is of paramount importance (Amiruddin et al., 2022).

Language develops over time and its development is a high-level cognitive skill involving auditory perception and oral proficiency in humans, facilitating verbal interaction of individual desires and needs (Maulinda, 2019). Language development or communication in children is one aspect of child development that should not escape the attention of educators in general and parents in particular. The linguistic development exhibited by children represents a remarkable and awe-inspiring achievement of humanity (Khomsiyatun, 2019). Consequently, this issue received significant attention. The development of language has been intensively studied for a long time. We have learned a great deal about how children speak, comprehend, and use language, but there is very little knowledge about the actual process of language development (Suciati, 2018).

Human beings engage in interaction with one another through communication in the form of language. This communication occurs both verbally and non-verbally, encompassing writing, reading, as well as signs or symbols (Rohimajaya & Hamer, 2020). The use of language involves a process that aligns with the stages of one's age. The question of how humans can utilize language as a means of communication has consistently sparked interest, leading to the emergence of numerous theories on language development (Setyaningsih & Katoningsih, 2022). The developmental trajectory of a child's language begins with simple expressions and progresses toward more complex linguistic structures. Infants commence without language, and it is only around the age of 4 months that they start observing and attempting to differentiate the sounds of language by reading their mother's lips. Infants employ their bodily tools, such as cries and other preverbal sounds, to convey their desires, needs, and necessities. They acquire their first language without explicit attention from their parents or caregivers (Sugiyanta, 2021).

According to Kumaravadivelu, there are five main constructs underlying the input-output sequence in language learning and use; input, intake, intake factors, intake processes, and output (Mahmoodi & Yousefi, 2019). In contrast, Krashen posits that language development in children and adults involves distinct processes. Children leverage innate language acquisition features akin to first language acquisition, while adults utilize general problem-solving abilities (Krashen, 1982). The subsequent stages of language development in children can be discerned through various developmental milestones documented in the literature, as per the theories of Noam Chomsky and Eric Lenneberg. Chomsky and Lenneberg propose that the progression of a child's language can be evaluated through their communicative and interactive abilities (Chomsky, 1969).

Numerous studies on children's first language have been conducted in Indonesia. Based on research of Amelin (2019), it can be concluded that a child's facial expressions and body movements assist those around them in understanding the child's spoken language. Research of Yumi (2019) further reveals that at the age of four, children in the early construction phase are capable of articulating sentences in declarative, interrogative, and imperative forms. This study aims to explore theories of the development of a child's first language. However, other research investigates various cases of first language development in children.

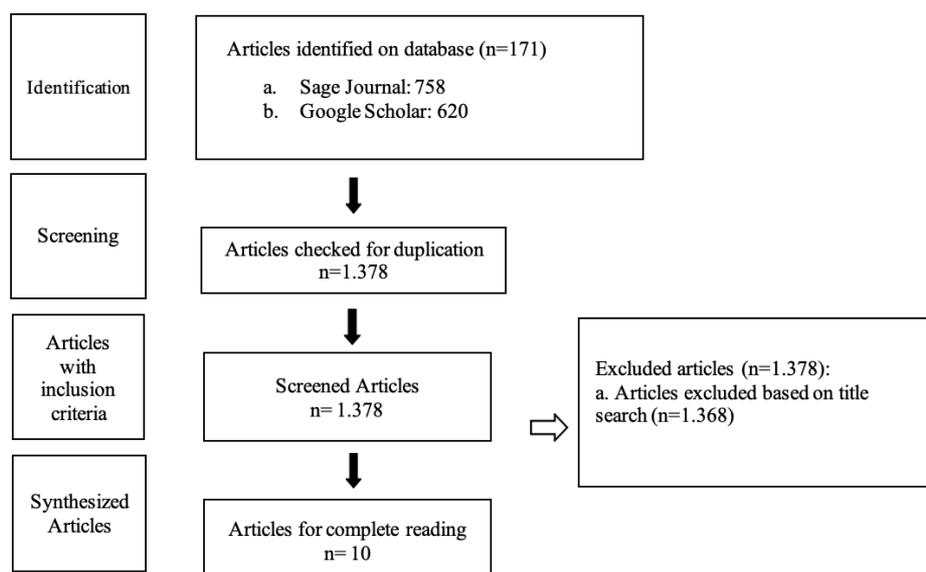
METHODS

The literature review in this research was conducted through systematic selection traced from international databases. The author searched for data sources from various databases, including Sage Journal (<https://journals.sagepub.com/>) and Google Scholar. The literature search technique employed keywords relevant to the research questions. The keyword list forming the basis for the literature search included Safety, Operations, and Patients. The search for articles was conducted in both English and Indonesian languages, with the publication years limited to the past 5 years (2018-2023). This study gathered and reviewed three theories of language development: behaviorist, nativist, and interactionist. To complement the exploration of these theories, 10 previous studies on first language development in children were examined. The literature was analyzed by reviewing core ideas about first language development in children. To facilitate data analysis, a review table was created.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the PRISMA Scheme or Diagram

Figure 1 illustrates the article selection process using the guidelines from the Preferred Reporting Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis (PRISMA). An initial search yielded a total of 1,378 articles from the years 2018-2023. Subsequently, the articles underwent screening, and 10 articles progressed to the next stage. The quality of these articles was assessed, resulting in a synthesis of 10 articles in the final report of the literature review.

Figure 1. PRISMA Diagram

The researcher conducted a selection of the obtained articles and extracted data from each article found in each database. The results of the reviewed articles related to first language development in children are as follows.

Table 1. Literature Review on the First Language Development in Children

Researcher	Method	Objective	Result
(Jones et al., 2023)	Analysist of speech corpora	To understand the characteristics of words in speech directed towards children as distinct from speech directed towards adults in influencing children's productive vocabulary.	Children's word production is clearly influenced by the characteristics of words spoken directly to them, emphasizing the need for researchers to exercise caution when utilizing adult-directed language corpora in calculating lexical measures.
(Abbot-Smith et al., 2022)	Comparative Study	To understand the process by which 3-year-old children use relevance inference to interpret indirect speech.	Empirically, it is observed that laboratory-based measurements of relevance inference reflect children's pragmatic abilities in the 'wild.' There is no clear relationship between relevance inference and Theory of Mind.
(Paradis, 2022)	Analysist Study	To understand the less studied language acquisition by Kidd and Garcia.	The existence of the multilingual concept as a distinctive development in children.
(Humairoh & Agustina, 2021)	Analysist Study	To understand the language acquisition process of a 4-year-old child.	Children acquire language through processes of imitation, learning with corrective and reinforcing assistance, analogies, and grammatical input from their parents. The child also demonstrates that difficulties in

(Hidayah et al., 2021)	Qualitative	To understand the role of nativist theory in the development of a child's language.	language and communication are heavily influenced by their environment. It is quite evident that natural processes and environmental influences play a crucial role in a child's first language acquisition.
(Al-Hamzi et al., 2021)	Descriptive Qualitative	To understand the factors influencing the development of the first language in children aged 1-3 years in Yemen.	In children, this theory emphasizes the inherent talent they possess and promotes the development of their language.
(Smolík & Bláhová, 2021)	Comparative Study	To identify early linguistic references in children aged 30 months.	The language development of a child can be manifested through the influence of parents and others in their environment at various stages, including pre-production, early production, first words, early fluency, intermediate fluency, and advanced fluency stages.
(Nyberg et al., 2021)	Analysist Study	To understand language development at the ages of 9 and 25 months in Swedish infants.	Mental state language and general language development show a unique relationship with individuals' reference to pronouns and verbs.
(van Berkel-van Hoof et al., 2020)	Comparative Study	To understand the effects or indicators in learning spoken words by deaf and hearing-impaired children.	There is no statistically significant correlation between Total Mind-mindedness and language proficiency ratings at either 9 or 25 months.
(Arsa et al., 2019)	Qualitative Descriptive	To understand early literacy in young children of the <i>Anak Dalam</i> ethnic group in Dharmasraya.	For children with hearing impairments, there is a sign effect on the speed of recognizing spoken words, albeit not accurately, and there is no interaction between the sign effect on reaction time in verbal deaf individuals. Hearing children do not exhibit sign effects in terms of both speed and accuracy.
			At the phonological level, it was found that 3-year-old children still cannot articulate the /r/ and /s/ phonemes correctly. At the syntactic level, the results indicate that 3-year-old children are already capable of articulating four types of sentences, namely declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory sentences

Discussion

The language development of a child is the child's ability to respond to sounds, follow instructions, and speak politely. Language development occurs rapidly and serves as a foundation for subsequent development during the toddler years (Suardi et al., 2019). Language development in young children through language acquisition is a crucial stage in language transmission to prevent extinction. The language development of young children is one of the factors influencing cognitive development (Humairoh & Agustina, 2021). The development of a child's language progresses from simple to complex levels, influenced by the child's growth and understanding of the environment (Abbot-Smith et al., 2022). The following are three theories that have a significant impact on language development in children.

1. *Behavioristic Theory*

The behaviorist perspective posits that language is a matter of respondent imitation. Prominent figures in behaviorism include Skinner and Bandura. Skinner, in particular, authored the book "Verbal Behavior," which serves as a reference for followers of this approach. He articulated that speaking and understanding language are acquired through environmental stimuli, specifically through a learning theory known as operant conditioning. Consequently, Skinner believed that verbal behavior is behavior driven by its consequences. If the consequence is a reward or something pleasurable, the behavior will be reinforced, and its ability and frequency will continue to develop. Conversely, if the consequence is punishment, the opposite will occur (Setyawan et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, according to Isna (2019), language development can be cultivated through imitation of others. Bandura also argues that children learn language by imitating a model, meaning they do not necessarily imitate the reinforcement from others. In other words, the foundational development of language skills in young children is acquired through communication and interaction that the child engages in with peers or adults (Suardi et al., 2019).

2. *Nativist Theory*

This Nativist theory holds the view that there is a close connection between biological factors and language development. The Nativist theory believes that language ability is innate from birth. Furthermore, language learning is not influenced by intelligence or individual experiences, according to this Nativist perspective. Within the Nativist framework, there is a belief in the role of biological evolution in shaping individuals to become linguistic beings

(Nordin Tahir, 2019). In alignment with the physical and mental growth of a child, language development tends to improve and increase. Nativist experts argue that language proficiency is inherently natural (innate), similar to the ability to walk, and is a part of human development influenced by brain maturity. Additionally, their rationale is that specific neurological parts of the human brain are linked to language development, so damage to these areas can result in language impairments (Stit & Nusantara, 2019).

Nativist experts also believe that children internalize grammatical rules, enabling them to construct various sentences without the need for training, reinforcement, or imitation of adult language. Furthermore, this theory posits that detecting specific language categories, such as phonology, syntax, and semantics, is part of an innate understanding in children (Wardhana, 2013). The Nativist theory asserts that language ability is innate from birth, a viewpoint supported by Lenneberg, who states that language proficiency is a capacity individuals possess based on biologically acquired prior knowledge (Yahya, 2020).

3. *Interactionist Theory*

According to this theory, language acquisition is the result of the interaction between students' psychological abilities and the language environment. The language acquired by students is closely related to their internal abilities and the input from their environment. The Language Acquisition Device (LAD) is present since birth; however, a child's language mastery ability is directly proportional to the quality, in line with Howard Gardner's view that individuals have linguistic intelligence from birth. However, linguistic intelligence alone is not the sole determinant for a child to have good language abilities; there must be external factors supporting them in receiving good language input as well (Nurlaila, 2020).

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the research study, it can be concluded that language development is a set of processes that occur within a child's brain when acquiring their mother tongue. A child's language development is significantly influenced by the family environment surrounding them. Cultural and social values related to language are internalized into the human subconscious. Subsequently, as time progresses and the child grows, they will acquire languages beyond what is taught by their mother, including second, third, or subsequent languages, depending on the social environment and cognitive level the child possesses through the learning process.

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