

## Phonological Aspect on First Language Acquisition

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### Abstract

This study aims to investigate first language acquisition on children aged 18 months with a focus on phonological aspect. The research method used is descriptive-qualitative approach. Data was collected through interviews, observation, and documentation. The observation results show that children at this age begin to master phonemes and can pronounce certain words. This study also examines the development of vowel and consonant phonemes in a child named S.S. The results show that S.S. can pronounce the vowel phonemes /a/, /i/, /u/, and /e/, but has difficulty with the vowel phoneme /o/. S.S. can also pronounce consonant phonemes /b, d, ɲ, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, s, t, y/. The role of S.S. mothers in helping language development is very important through interaction, playing, and repeating sentences. There are no significant barriers to S.S. language development, and media such as nursery rhymes and YouTube Kids are used to assist along the process. It is concluded that at the age of 18 months, children begin to master phonemes and can pronounce words. The role of parents, especially mothers, is very important in helping children to acquire language by interacting and using appropriate media.

**Keywords:** *First Language Acquisition, Language Development, Phonology.*

### INTRODUCTION

Humans use language to be able to communicate in everyday life. Language is a form of rules that are used in communicating and adapting to their environment. The type of language can vary depending on where humans live. Both verbal and nonverbal communication are among the basic (primary) needs of humans (Khomsiyatun, 2019). Besides, humans are social creatures; they depend on the presence of other humans to fulfill their social and personal needs. These requirements must be met through interaction, which is mediated by language. Kridalaksana argues that humans learn to communicate through language from infancy (Suardi et al., 2019). A child's journey toward linguistic mastery starts with learning their first language, also known as their mother tongue. Members of social groupings employ language, which is simply a system of sound symbols and arbitrary discourse, to cooperate, communicate, and identify themselves.

First language acquisition is characterized by continuity, which takes the shape of a progression of units from simple single-word utterances to complex word combinations. First language acquisition, second language acquisition, and third language acquisition are all possible forms of language learning (Yanti, 2016). Once children or adults have mastered their first language, acquisition of a second language happens when they do it formally and purposefully. A child can acquire a second language when the child has mastered his first language first (Aprilia, 2020). One of the determining factors for the success of language acquisition in children lies in the biological and social aspects. In addition, intelligence factors can also affect a child in acquiring language.

Childhood is the most important period for language acquisition. This phase is referred to as the golden age. At this time the child's brain experiences the fastest development throughout life. The acquisition of the first language is related to the social development of children and the formation of social identity. According to Manurung, during the acquisition of children's language, it is more directed to the function of communication than the form of language (Salnita et al., 2019). Language acquisition in children has the characteristics of continuity; It is a continuum and starts from simple one-word utterances to more complex combinations of words and sentences. Acquisition of children's language begins when parents invite to speak (communicate) through language (Aprilia, 2020). Parents invite babies to talk instead of assuming that babies are able to communicate. Language communication produced by a baby can be in the form of babbling. The language of a newborn child acquires it from his mother.

Language acquisition in children has various periods. Ingram states that first language acquisition is broken down into four phases (Suardi et al., 2019). First, the preliminary stage which characterized by three types of behavior namely memorizing, imitating, and understanding beginning. Second, first period (1-1.6 years) the child acquires a number of sounds with a special meaning stated the idea of a sentence as a whole, but there is no evidence that children understand grammar. Third, second period (1.6-2.0) the child realizes that everything has the meaning in sequence as they pick up words and start asking questions about what things are called. Fourth, children in the era (2.0-2.6) start to construct sentences effectively in that they include words for the two primary grammatical relations of subject and predicate.

Traditionally, Four stages of language development are distinguished: 1) the pre-linguistic period (0–12 months), during which the child can grumble and make a variety of noises; 2) Children who have mastered using a word to express an idea are said to be in the one-word stage (12 to 18 months) (Kurniati & Nuryani, 2020). At this stage, parents and other adults should also pay attention to the child's activities and other non-linguistic components like movements, gestures, expressions, and objects the child points to. 3) Children who have joined two words into brief utterances without prepositions, demonstrative words, and other forms are said to be in the two-word stage (18 to 24 months). 4) The many-word stage (3-5 years) is marked by a child's ability to construct compound phrases, negative interrogative statements, and other types of sentences. It does not appear in H in a four-year-old child, which is comparable to a speech that begins to lengthen and more regular grammar. He used three or more words instead of merely two. Children's speech starts to get longer and their grammar gets more consistent at the age of 3 to 4 years.

According to Ellis, two types of language acquisition are the formal type learned in school and the naturalistic type (Nissa et al., 2022). The naturalistic form is first because it occurs naturally, without a teacher, and learning happens unintentionally in a social setting. The second type of language learning is formal in character and takes place in the classroom with teachers, prepared tools, and materials. This type of language learning is intentional or aware. Noam Chomsky suggests that there are 2 stages of language acquisition in children (Helly et al., 2021). First, the process of competence in this process includes the stages of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatic stages. Second, the performance process in this process includes understanding and publishing.

In general, the study of language acquisition looks at how phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics are learned. A crucial area for deciding and

affecting language theory is phonological acquisition. A subfield of linguistics known as phonology investigates how language sounds are created and altered. Phonology studies how words sound both generally and specifically for certain purposes. Phonology is understood from two dimensions (Setyaningsih et al., 2014). First, phonology is a mental representation of linguistic knowledge (mental representation of linguistics knowledge). Second, phonology is a description of linguistic knowledge related to patterns and systems of human language in general (the representation of the sound patterns in human language in general).

There is quite a lot of research that examines language acquisition in children, such as Indah Permatasari Suardi's research which was made in 2019 entitled language acquisition in early childhood, the conclusion in this research is that language acquisition in children in the phonological aspect is influenced by environmental factors, especially families, this is marked the amount of vocabulary they get in the family and around them. Children can also say some nouns, verbs, and adjectives (Suardi et al., 2019). Furthermore, there is a research by Melati Aprilia in 2020 entitled language acquisition for children aged 2.5 years with focus on phonological aspects. The conclusion of this study is from the data obtained a 2.5 year old child named Naira has acquired her language vocally and consonantly well. Naira has mastered the vowel sounds /a/, /i/, /u/, /e/, and /o/. Apart from that, Naira also mastered the consonant sounds /b/, /d/, /m/, /n/, /g/, /s/, /h/, and /y/ (Aprilia, 2020).

Besides, a research from Kanaya Afflaha Nissa with the title Language Acquisition of 3-4 Year Old Children (Case Study On Early Childhood Tiara School Pondok Cabe Ilir, South Tangerang) in 2021 shows that the results of this study indicate that language acquisition in new children aged 3-5 years occurs in the fields of phonology, syntax, and semantics. From phonological point of view, subjects E, A, and R have mastered most of the consonant phonemes. However, there are also some phonemes that cannot be pronounced perfectly. In terms of the morphology of subjects E, A, and R, they have mastered the forms of words that are acquired or mastered, namely monomorphemic word forms (one morpheme) and language acquisition in terms of syntax, indicating that there is a phenomenon of simple sentence production or often called minor sentences (Nissa et al., 2022).

This research will explain in more depth the acquisition of the first language in children aged 18 months from a phonological perspective. Children's language acquisition is obtained from the family and the surrounding environment. In analyzing language acquisition, researchers will explain by analyzing phonological aspects in children. The first language acquisition in this study was Indonesian. The purpose of this research is to know the list of vocabulary has been acquired by children aged 18 months and how the pronunciation.

## **METHOD**

The method used in this research is descriptive method using a qualitative approach. According to (Creswell, 2014), a method for studying and comprehending the significance that individuals or groups attribute to a social or human situation is qualitative research. The research process includes developing study questions and methods, data collection that typically takes place in the participant's environment, inductive data analysis that builds from specifics to a broad theme, and the researcher's interpretation of the significance of the data. Whereas Noor in (Aprilia,

2020) argues that, the descriptive method is defined as a research method that explains the events or phenomena that are happening. This qualitative descriptive method is used to display the results of the research conducted.

This research was conducted by directly examining the children who would be the research subjects. In acquiring the first language, children cannot immediately speak fluently. Therefore, it must be seen and studied properly to see the stages of language acquisition in children. In this study the researcher will listen to the words that can be said by the subject to be studied. After that the researcher will interact with the research subject to encourage the subject to say words that can be spoken. The subject in this study was a girl named S.S, who lived with parents, one older sister, and one older brother.

In collecting data, the researchers will use these instruments; interview, observation, and documentation.

1. Interview

This interview was conducted for the mother of the subject to be examined. Before researching children who will be research subjects, researchers will conduct interviews which contain questions about the research subject and ask permission to conduct research on their children who will be research subjects.

2. Observation

This observation is the second stage that will be used for this research. Observations were made to see how the interactions and daily life of the research subjects were. In this stage the researcher will also try to interact with the subject in order to obtain data that will be the result of the research.

3. Documentation

The final stage is documentation. Documentation is done to prove that the research was conducted. Documentation will be in the form of an audio recording of the subject to be studied, which contains the results of the research conducted.

The data analysis stage in this study consists of three stages from Miles and Huberman in (Suardi et al., 2019).

a. Data reduction.

Reduction is done in four ways, namely a) carrying out the process of transcription of speech data into written form; b) the data that has been transcribed is then identified; c) carry out the classification process; d) interpret data that has previously been classified.

b. Data presentation

The data that has been classified is presented in tabular form.

c. Drawing conclusions.

In this third stage, a re-verification process is carried out on the initial data that has been collected.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Observation

At the age of 18 months, the child is still in the stage of getting to know a language, namely the mother tongue. At the age of 18 months, the child is still at the stage of acquiring phonology and morphology. Phonology is where the child begins to produce sounds, both vowel and consonant. In this phonological acquisition stage, children aged 18 months have begun to be clear in the pronunciation of phonemes, especially the pronunciation of vowels. But in some cases there are also many children

who cannot pronounce vowels or consonants. According to Jakobson Ardiana and Sodikin (Suardi et al., 2019) the basic sounds in human speech are /p/, /a/, /i/, /u/, /t/, /c/, /m/, and so on. Then at the age of one year the child begins to fill in these sounds with other sounds. For example /p/ combined with /a/ becomes pa/ and /m/ combined with /a/ becomes /ma/. After the child is able to produce sound, over time, the child will be more proficient in producing sound. This is influenced by the environment, cognitive and speech tools.

In this study, the language being learned by children is Indonesian as the first language. Observations were made by means of field observations, namely by inviting children to chat while playing. The results of observations on language acquisition in children aged 18 months in the phonology stage are the data in the following table.

Word	Phonology System	Meaning of word
Ayah	/ayah/	Ayah
Mamah	/mamah/	Mamah
Bapak	/bapak/	Bapak
Ibu	/ibu/	Ibu
Kaka	/kaka/	Kaka
Dedek	/dedek/	Dedek
Emen	/emen/	Permen
Neka	/Neka/	Boneka
Ini	/ini/	Kesini
Ayu	/ayu/	Hayu
estim	/estim/	Es krim
Ndak au	/ndak au/	Tidak mau
Ndak	/ndak/	Tidak
mam	/mam/	Makan
muh	/muh/	Minum
upas	/upas/	Lepas
abis	/abis/	Habis
nyanya	/nyanya/	Nanya
bubu	/bubu/	Bubur
memeng	/memeng/	Kucing
yam	/yam/	Ayam
mie	/mie/	Mie
enan	/enan/	Permainan
pepe	/pepe/	Handphone (hp)
enta	/enta/	Minta
Aduh	/aduh/	Aduh
tuh	/tuh/	Jatuh
pun	/pun/	Ampun
Ma mau mam	/ma mau mam/	Mamah mau makan
Ma mau muh	/ma mau muh/	Mamah mau minum
Ta es	/ta es/	Minta es
Ma mau jan	/ma mau jan/	Mamah mau jajan
Jatuh	/Jatuh/	Terjatuh
Kabul	/kabul/	Kabur

In this study, as seen in the table, the subjects who took part in this study were able to pronounce consonants and vowels, even though their pronunciation was still unclear. The words spoken generally imitate the words of his mother which are then associated with objects or characteristics. The acquisition of phonology or language sounds begins with the acquisition of basic sounds.

#### 1. Acquisition of vowel phonemes

Acquisition of phonology is the acquisition of language sounds in children. The acquisition of these sounds is related to the child's ability to pronounce vowel and consonant sound symbols. Based on the results of the research conducted, the research subjects, namely SS children, had mastered various variations of vocal phonemes. The vocal phoneme /a/ appears in the example of the word [mamah] "mother (in english)" or the word [neka/Boneka] "doll (in english)". The vocal phoneme /i/ appears in the example of the word [ibu] "mother" or the word [abis/habis] "finished (in english)". The mastery of the phoneme /u/ can be seen in the following examples of the word [aduh] "ouch (in english)" and the word [bubu/bubur] "porridge (in english)". The mastery of the phoneme /e/ appears in the example of the word [dedek] "young brother (in english)" and the word [enan/permainan] "game (in english)". But unfortunately the subjects in this study could not pronounce the vowel /o/ phoneme. Thus it has been stated that the subject of this study, namely SS, can pronounce the vocal phonemes /a/, /i/, /u/, and /e/, but cannot pronounce the vocal phoneme /o/.

#### 2. Acquisition of a consonant phoneme

Based on the results of the research conducted, the subjects in this study, namely SS, were able to pronounce the consonant phonemes /b, d, ɲ, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, s, t, y/. Examples of words for the consonant phoneme /b/ in the word [father]. the consonant phoneme /d/ appears in the example of the word [ndak/tidak] "no (in english)". The consonant phoneme /ɲ/ is found in the word [memeng/kucing] "cat (in english)". Examples of consonant phonemes /h/ for the word [muh/minum] "drink (in english)". An example of the consonant phoneme /j/ appears in the word [jatuh] "fall (in english)". An example of the consonant phoneme /k/ is shown in the example of the word [kaka] "Brother/sister (in english)". Consonant phoneme /l/ [Kabul/kabur] "escape (in english)". An example of a consonant phoneme /m/ appears in the word [ma mau mam/ mamah mau makan] "mom i want to eat (in english)". An example of a consonant phoneme /n/ appears in the word [enta/minta] "ask/ want something (in english)". An example of the consonant phoneme /p/ appears in the word [pepe/ handphone] "cellphone (in english)". an example of the consonant phoneme /s/ appears in the example of the word [abis/habis] "finished (in english)". An example of the consonant phoneme /t/ is shown in the example of the word [ta es/ minta es] "i want ice ( in english)". and examples of consonant phonemes /y/ appear in the word [nyanya] and the word [yam/ayam] "chicken (in english)". Thus it has been asked that the subject of this study, namely SS, can already pronounce 13 consonant phonemes.

### B. Interview

The table below shows the results of interviews conducted with the mother of the research subject, namely SS. SS's mother is a housewife, SS's father is a teacher. SS has one older sister and one older brother.

No	Question	Answer
1	What is your child's language?	My child's language is Indonesian.
2	What is your role as a parent in mastering language in children?	As a parent, I help my child to acquire a new language by talking to the child, inviting them to play, then repeating sentences.
3	What is the process of acquiring language in your child?	The process went well, my child got a lot of new words. Although many pronunciations are not clear from word to word.
4	Are there any obstacles when developing language acquisition in children?	So far there are no obstacles that are too heavy, because SS quickly picks up new words spoken by other people, so there are no obstacles that make it difficult to acquire the language.
5	Is there any media used to help develop language acquisition in children?	The media that I use are usually children's songs and YouTube kids. I usually play youtube kids when my child is eating.

Based on the results of the interview table above, it can be explained that in table 1 the mother of SS explained that the language being acquired by SS was Indonesian. Furthermore, in table 2 the role of parents in language acquisition from SS usually the mother of SS invites SS to play or by talking and repeating sentences or words so that SS can quickly catch the words conveyed. In table number 3 the mother of SS explains that the process of acquiring words from the subject of SS children has been going well, many words have been obtained by SS at the age of 18 months, although there are still many words that are not clear when spoken, but so far the process went smoothly.

Meanwhile, in table 4 the mother of SS explained that so far in the language acquisition carried out by SS there were no difficult obstacles, because SS was quite fast in acquiring new languages spoken by people around him, for example from his older sister who often invited SS play and talk. finally, in table 5 the mother of SS explained that there were several media used for the language acquisition process on the subject of SS children. usually SS's mother uses media such as children's songs which can be used as a media, then SS's mother also uses media such as youtube kids and usually shows them while SS is eating.

## CONCLUSION

This study examines the development of vowel and consonant phonemes in a child named SS. The results show that SS can pronounce the vowel phonemes /a/, /i/, /u/, and /e/, but has difficulty with the vowel phoneme /o/. SS can also pronounce consonant phonemes /b, d, ɲ, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, s, t, y/. SS's mother played an important role in helping SS master the language by speaking, playing, and repeating sentences. There are no significant barriers to SS language development, and media such as nursery rhymes and YouTube Kids are used to assist in the process. Based on this study, it can be concluded that at the age of 18 months, children begin to master phonemes and can pronounce words in Indonesian. The role of parents, especially mothers, is very important in helping children develop language by interacting and using appropriate media. Although there were some difficulties in pronouncing some

of the phonemes, there were no significant obstacles in the language development of the children studied.

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