

INVESTIGATING THE BILINGUAL ACQUISITION OF LANGUAGE ACQUIRED BY AN EARLY AGED CHILD FROM SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

This research deals with acquisition of language acquired by Kent Fukada, a one and half year Indonesian baby boy, at his current age of 1-2 years old in Pematangsiantar. This baby boy is a bilingual child because since his birth, he got three languages; Hokkian, Indonesian, and English. Bilingual covers to both bilingual and multilingual acquisition. Fierro-Cobas and Chan (2001:80) defined language development is a multifaceted and ever-changing process that is shaped by factors such as a child's age, the degree of language exposure, and social interactions. It is common for bilingual children to engage in both simultaneous and sequential bilingualism. The purpose of this research is to know the words combination and language development produced by a bilingual child in his current age. The researchers used some theories to answer the problem such as Chomsky (2009), Romaine (1995) as cited in Zhu and Li (2005), Fierro-Cobas and Chan (2001). The research methodology utilized a case study approach, and the data collection involved following the subject through naturalistic observation to record their communications with individuals around them (Clark and Clark, 1977). According to Fierro-Cobas and Chan (2001), a child at the age of 1-2 years can simultaneously use two languages. However, this study's results demonstrate that Kent Fukada, as a bilingual child, can produce a considerable number of words and combine more than two languages, including Hokkian (as the mother tongue), English, and Indonesian.

Keywords: Bilingualism, language acquisition, early age, sequential acquisition, simultaneous acquisition

Introduction

How is language acquired? Language acquisition is a process that takes place over an extended period of time through learning, rather than inheritance. There are two primary perspectives on language learning. The first perspective, advocated by environmentalists and behaviorists, posits that language learning is a process of stimulus-response-reinforcement, as proposed by Skinner in 1957. According to this theory, children are considered blank slates that can be filled with information and knowledge. However, this theory was later criticized by American linguist Chomsky in 1965, who proposed the innatist theory, which suggests that children are born with an innate ability to learn language (Language Acquisition Device). Additionally, Krashen

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refined this theory in 1982 with the Natural Approach, which emphasizes the importance of providing a supportive environment for language acquisition. This means that children in the world can learn language at the certain age in a similar manner. In conclusion, the two theories show that children do not acquire the language directly, but needs process because language can be acquired through learning and children have the ability to do it.

The first language that children acquired through their learning is known as language acquisition (Purba et al., 2024a). As per Chomsky (2009:101-102), language acquisition is a process that occurs when certain pre-existing capacities reach the appropriate level of development, aided by suitable environmental factors. As a matter of growth, children attempt to acquire language through learning. Nowadays, monolingual is less to be found again, means that people are at least bilingual/multilingual. The form of bilingual and multilingual can be acquired through planned and unplanned. As per Zhu and Li (2005:165), planned bilingualism is a deliberate decision made regarding language learning and use with the aim of creating a bilingual individual. This implies that some parents opt to speak one language to their children, while the other speaks a different language, even if it is not their native language. In contrast, unplanned bilingualism arises when an individual is compelled to function in their community using two or more languages due to an environmental factor. For instance, children of bilingual parents acquire language through everyday interactions without undergoing any formal teaching and learning. In other words, the bilingual languages acquired because of social interaction and the community for communication.

Both planned and unplanned bilingualism are choices for parents to their children. They need language developments for each bilingualism. Developing bilingualism is a very dynamic and complex stage in child's age. There are two patterns for a bilingual child in developing their bilingualism, they are simultaneous bilingualism and sequential bilingualism. Fierro-Cobas and Chan (2001) defined simultaneous bilingualism as the process by which a child acquires two languages simultaneously before the age of three, while sequential bilingualism refers to the acquisition of a second language by age three, after already having acquired the primary language.

Bilingualism is a widespread phenomenon worldwide, with more than half of the global population speaking multiple languages (Ansaldo et al., 2008), as emphasized by Garrido, Lopez, and Carballo (2024). Similarly to monolingual children, the development of language in bilingual children significantly influences their cultural identity, personal and familial well-being, and personal

identity. As per De Houwer (2015), the early acquisition of a second language is associated with greater proficiency in typically developing (TD) bilingual children. In this context, bilingualism is classified as simultaneous if it starts from birth and sequential if the second language is acquired after the first three years of life (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2014). The age at which the second language is acquired may impact a child's proficiency in both languages. For instance, research indicates that simultaneous bilingual individuals are more proficient in the second language compared to sequential bilingual individuals (Thordardottir, 2011; Purba et al., 2024b).

Many studies have indicated that speaking multiple languages is linked to various cognitive, academic, social, and emotional advantages (McLeod and Verdon, 2017; Herman et al., 2024). Additionally, bilingual children with TD do not display any deficiencies in language and communication skills compared to monolingual children (Paradis, Genesee, and Crago, 2011). However, some variations have been noticed between bilingual and monolingual children during their early years of life (Jegatheesan, 2010). Specifically, elements such as the age at which the second language is acquired, the extent of exposure to that language, and the social context in which the language is acquired can influence the development of language and communication skills (McLeod, Verdon, and Bowen, 2013).

Previous research has been done by De Houwer (1990). In a comprehensive longitudinal study of a girl named Kate who was simultaneously learning Dutch and English, De Houwer's (1990) research provided strong evidence for the separate development theory. De Houwer found that Kate used only Dutch when interacting with monolingual Dutch speakers, but would occasionally switch to English when conversing with Dutch-English bilinguals. This demonstrated that the child was aware of the linguistic abilities of her interlocutors. Additionally, De Houwer suggested that Kate used English and Dutch in the same manner as monolingual children of her respective languages. According to De Houwer, Kate was already fully bilingual by the age of 2;7. Although lexical mixing was not a primary focus of De Houwer's analysis, the phenomenon was discussed. In most of Kate's mixed utterances, a single-word item, usually a noun from one language, was inserted into an utterance that was otherwise completely in the other language. These mixed utterances were well-formed, meaning they were structurally grammatical. De Houwer used this as evidence for the child's separate rule systems for the two languages. She cited Poplack (1980: 605), who noted that to produce well-formed mixed utterances, "the speaker must ... know enough about the grammar of each language, and the way they interact, to avoid ungrammatical forms."

The purpose of this article is to find out the words combination and language development produced by a simultaneous child named Kent Fukada, 26 months, where his parents use different language, father uses English and mother uses Hokkian language. In short, the researchers refer this research to the child's daily activity in communicating.

Theoretical Review

Early Childhood Bilingualism

Romaine (1995) as cited in Zhu & Li (2005:167-168) classified the main types of early childhood bilingualism into six categories, they are:

Type 1: "One-person-one-language"

Parents: The parents possess diverse native languages, with each exhibiting a varying level of proficiency in the other's linguistic skills.

Community: One of the parents' language is the prevalent language in the community.

Strategy: From the time of birth, each parent communicates in their own language with the child.

Type 2: "Non-dominant home language" or "One-language-one-environment"

Parents: The different native languages gained by parents.

Community: The language spoken by one of the parents is predominantly used in the community.

Strategy: Both of the child's parents communicate with him in the non-dominant language at home. However, the child is only exposed to the dominant language when he is outside of the house, especially at nursery school.

Type 3: "Non-dominant home language without community support"

Parents: The same native language shared by parents.

Community: The language that is most commonly used is not the parent's.

Strategy: The child hears the parents speaking in their own tongue.

Type 4: "Double non-dominant home language without community support"

Parents: The parents have different native languages.

Community: The dominant language is different from either of the parents' languages.

Strategy: The parents each speak their own language to the child from birth.

Type 5: "Non-native parents"

Parents: The parents speak the same language at home.

Community: The prevalent language is identical to that of the parents.

Strategy: The child is consistently spoken to in a language that is not their native tongue by one of the parents.

Type 6: "Mixed languages"

Parents: Both parents speak two languages.

Community: Community segments may also speak two languages.

Strategy: Parents switch between languages and codes.

Developing bilingualism

As per Fierro-Cobas and Chan (2001:80), language growth is a complicated and constantly changing process that is influenced by factors like the child's age, language exposure, and social interactions. A bilingual child usually follows one of two language acquisition patterns: simultaneous bilingualism, where the child acquires two languages at the same time before the age of three, and sequential bilingualism, where the child acquires a second language by the age of three after already having learned the primary language. It's important to note that preschoolers may differ qualitatively in their ability to acquire a second language compared to school-age children. For older children and adults, learning a second language is a conscious process rather than an unconscious one, and is more accurately referred to as language learning rather than language acquisition.

Simultaneous bilingualism

The process of a young child acquiring two languages at the same time is referred to as simultaneous bilingualism. According to Fierro-Cobas and Chan (2001:80), this developmental phase typically involves two stages of bilingual language growth. The initial stage is characterized by an indistinct, "single-

language" system that incorporates aspects from both languages. This stage is marked by the same developmental milestones that a monolingual child would experience, such as acquiring single words, expanding vocabulary, forming two-word combinations, and using verb tenses. However, in the case of simultaneous bilingualism, two languages are involved, leading to language mixing, where words from both languages are used in a single sentence, or language blending, which involves using word stems from one language with prefixes and suffixes from the other.

The second stage occurs when the child begins to differentiate the two language systems, treating each one as a separate system for distinct purposes. For instance, the child may associate one language with a specific person, such as a parent or babysitter, or with a particular context, such as home or school. This stage is characterized by the child's ability to alternate between the two languages, employing a particular language for a specific context. Additionally, if the family frequently switches between multiple languages within a single conversation, the child will learn this pattern and recognize that two distinct languages are being used. The stages of simultaneous bilingualism can be visualized in the table below (Table 1).

Sequential bilingualism

According to Fierro-Cobas and Chan (2001:83), the process of acquiring a second language before the age of three is distinct from the process of acquiring a first language. One key difference is that a sequentially bilingual child can draw on their knowledge and experience with their first language. Additionally, the duration and number of stages a child goes through in the sequential language acquisition process are influenced by their temperament and motivation, as shown in table 2. A socially oriented child, for example, may quickly learn fixed phrases like "my turn" or "all done" to interact with other children and adults. A less outgoing child may have a "silent" phase when they are with people who speak their second language.

Another factor is the relative exposure to the second language compared to the first language, which can affect how a child develops the second language. If a child hears and uses both languages equally, their developmental language pattern will resemble patterns in monolingual language development. However, most bilingual children have a clear "majority" and "minority" language, with the majority language being the one with which they feel most comfortable. It is important to note that a child's majority language may not always be the first language they are exposed to, as a child from an exclusively Chinese-speaking family who then starts functioning in an English-speaking society may ultimately use English as their majority Language (Table 2).

Research Methodology

The research design of this research paper is a case study (research). It is generally a research on a child as a case, may be using naturalistic or experimental method. In performing this study, the researchers relied on the Naturalistic approach, which entailed daily direct observations, aided by diaries, recordings, and photographs, and so on. The focal point of this research was a child who was between 1 and 2 years old, by the name of Kent Fukada, residing in Pematangsiantar city, located within the North Sumatera province. The data gathered for this research was the product of monitoring

Age	Stage	Milestone	Red flag for language development problem
Birth to 2 months	Undifferentiated (contains elements from both languages)	Cooing	
2-6 months	Undifferentiated	Babbling	No bilabial sounds
6-15 months	Undifferentiated	First words (age of appearance might be somewhat later than with monolingual speakers but is still within normal range)	Less than one word per week
1-2 years	Undifferentiated	Language blend (parts of words in both languages are blended in the same word)	Less than 20 words (2 languages combined) by 20 months
2-3 years	Undifferentiated	Language mixing (words of different languages are used in the same phrase or adapted to the grammar of the other language)	A countable number of words by 30 months. No word combinations
4 years and older	Differentiated	Uses each language as a separate system	

Table 1. Simultaneous acquisition of two languages (adapted from Fierro-Cobas and Chan, 2001:80).

Table 2. Sequential acquisition of two languages (adapted from Fierro-Cobas and Chan, 2001:83).

Stage	Milestone	Red flag for language development problem
First language	Normal acquisition sequence	Milestone abnormal
Second language		
Interactional period	Use of nonverbal communication and fixed phrases	Echolalia
Inference period	Grammatical rules of the first language are applied to the second language	Syntactic errors in the first language
Silent period	Selective mutism (can be loner in anxious children)	Prolonged or true mutism
Code-switching	Switches between languages in the same conversation	Word retrieval difficulties

Data 1. This data 1 lists some words produced by Kent Fukada in using English. The words produced is in one syllable and more than one syllables.

No.	Words
1	No
2	Bus
3	Cock
4	boat
5	bye
6	fish
7	bird
8	nose
9	hen
10	cock (refers to "clock")
11	spoon
12	eye
13	on
14	off
15	car
16	bag
17	pen
18	book
19	krak (refers to "truck")
20	key
21	pon (refers to "phone")
22	train
23	cat
24	dog
25	duck
26	ant
27	box
28	sit
29	fan
30	tea
31	sock
32	sus (refers to "shoes")
33	ball
34	hi
35	hello
36	cold
37	dark
38	comb
39	hair
40	new
41	wheel
42	yes

and documenting the child's language development, as well as the interactions between the child and their parents. In order to make the analysis clear, the researchers collected all child's language acquisition in three languages, they are: Hokkian, English, and Indonesia.

In undertaking the data analysis, specific procedures were employed to

Data 2. List of the words in Hokkian language produced in one syllable.

No.	Words
1	tipi (refers to "TV")
2	awer (refers to "flower")
3	helmet
4	kak eng (refers to "charging")
5	jacket
6	raining
7	rain coat
8	sit down
9	tissue
10	morning
11	mamot (refers to "remote")
12	miming (swimming)
13	papo (baby powder)
14	sai go (let's go)
15	Motorcycle
16	thangkiu (thank you)
17	Lizard
18	AC
19	kak nau (refers to "cut nail")

Data 3. List of the words in Hokkian language produced in one syllable.

No.	Words
1	si (clean)
2	kham (close)
3	jin (get inside/enter)
4	sou (hand)
5	ai (want/yes)
6	pao (pick-a-back)
7	ciak (eat)
8	sao (hot)
9	chia (motorcycle/car)
10	huai (broken/damage)
11	khu (cry)
12	qi (go)
13	cia (house)

conduct this examination of the data, which comprised of the following steps:

1. Collecting all of the child's language acquisition (Hokkian, English, and Indonesian) through recording.
2. Classifying the language acquisition for each respective language.
3. Analyzing the data in relation to the various types of early childhood bilingualism.
4. Examining the data to determine the simultaneous acquisition of two languages and the number of words the child can produce, as well as the number of languages they can combine to produce those words.

Results and Discussion

Results

Kent Fukada, a 2 year-old child, acquires simultaneous bilingualism. The languages acquired by Kent are English, Hokkian and Indonesia. Each language can be spoken either in one syllable or more than one syllable.

One Language produced or combined

Data 1. This data 1 lists some words produced by Kent Fukada in using English. The words produced is in one syllable and more than one syllables.

After conducting their research, the scientists discovered that young children, particularly those who are 2 years old or younger and have been exposed to multiple languages, produce a significant number of words. In this particular case, the child in question was exposed to Hokkian, English, and Indonesian languages, despite the parents rarely speaking Indonesian to the child. This finding is distinct from the previous research conducted by Fierro-Cobas and

Data 4. List of words in Hokkian produced in more than one syllable

No	Words
1	lok khai (get up/get out)
2	pak pak (drop down/fall)
3	thong thong (hurt)
4	yen cin (eye)
5	er tuo (ear)
6	phi ku (ass/buttom)
7	tok bak (chop meat)
8	ihuk (clothes)
9	tata (hang out)
10	asi (refers to "sia yi" - raining)
11	khai men (open the door)
12	cie cie (sister)
13	ko ko (brother)
14	ciu ciu (uncle)
15	pho pho (grandmother)
16	nai nai (grandmother)
17	ye ye (grandfather)
18	kong kong (grandfather)
19	suk suk (uncle)
20	aem (aunt)
21	acim (aunt)
22	pai pai (worship)
23	mamam theng (having soup)
24	sie sie (thanks/thank you)
25	neng neng (refers to "len leng" ; cold)
26	kay ya kai (refers to "sie je" ; writing)
27	chit chit (clean)
28	co phai/co huai (make it broken)
29	cek kong (older uncle)

Data 5. List of words in Indonesia produced in more than one syllable

No	Words
1	abun (refers to "sabun" - soap)
2	buku (book)
3	papi (father)
4	mami (mother)
5	rokok (cigarette)
6	bapak (Mister or sir)
7	ibu (madam or miss)
8	nenek (grandmother)
9	kakek (grandfather)
10	opung (opung is batak language, means grandmother)
11	dedek (little brother)
12	abang (big brother)
13	apek (uncle)
14	susu (milk)
15	bobok (sleep)
16	agung (refers to "jagung" ; corn)
17	mimik (refers to "minum" ; drink)
18	mamam (refers to "makan" ; eat)
19	eek (refers to "kecoa/kotoran" : cockroach/dirt)
20	kompem (refers to "kompeng" ; nipple/dot)
21	ban (wheel, tyre)

Chan (2001: 80) in the Contemporary Pediatrics journal, Volume 18, Issue 7, which stated that 1-2-year-old simultaneous children can produce fewer than 20 words across two languages, and 2-3-year-old children have a countable number of words by 30 months with no word combinations.

Discussion

Bilingual first language acquisition (BFLA) is affected by several factors, including

4.1.2 Combination of words become a phrase or sentence.

No	Combination of words
1	tok bak (chop the meat)
2	sit boat
3	sit train
4	papi ce (father sits)
5	papi.... Sit boat (father.... I want to sit boat)
6	fan on (turn on the fan)
7	fan off (turn off the fan)
8	AC on (turn on the AC)
9	AC off (turn off the AC)
10	TV on (turn on the TV)
11	TV off (turn off the TV)
12	papi bye (goodbye, father)
13	papi bao qing qian (father pickaback qing qian)
14	papi... khan suk suk (father... I want to see uncle)
15	nai nai co phai (grandmother makes it broken)
16	suk suk chi (uncle gets away)
17	suk suk khai men, qi cek kong cia (uncle opens the door, go to elder uncle's house)
18	no money, no buy car

4.1.3 Two or more than two languages produced or combined.

No	Two or more than two languages combined
1	duduk car (sit in the car)
2	papi ma ma (father is angry)
3	mamam ai (I want to eat)
4	roti ai (I want to have a bread)
5	ini AC (this is Air Conditioner/AC)
6	ini remot (this is a remote)
7	duck mai (No duck/ I don't want duck)
8	papi.... Duduk car (father.... I want to sit car)
9	car bo (no car/there is no car)
10	bapak chit-chit car (A man cleans car)
11	ini spoon (this is a spoon)
12	ini papi phone (this is father's cellphone)
13	duduk truck (sit in the truck)
14	papi cokong, asi chuan rain coat sek-sek len-len (father is working, raining, use rain coat, wet and cold)
15	ini new car (this is new car)
16	ini ban bo, qian qian co phai (no wheel, qian qian make it broken)
17	qian qian co phai train (qian qian makes train broken)
18	khak nau bo (no cutting nail)
19	ban, papi ban, qian qian co phai truck, khuk (wheel...father, the wheel, qian qian makes truck broken, I cry)

Dialogue 1

A: Papi.... Fan on (father, please turn on the fan)
B: no...no... the fan is broken
who make it broken?
A: nai-nai (grandmother)
nai-nai co phai (grandmother makes it broken)

Dialogue 2

A: pho-pho chi na li? (where is grandmother going to?)
B: pho-pho chi cek kong cia. (grandmother is going to elder uncle's house)

those that impact monolingual acquisition and bilingual-specific factors. These bilingual-specific factors include the specific language combinations being learned, the quantity, consistency, and contexts of language exposure. Referring to the findings mentioned and discussed above, the researchers found some interesting points about the bilingualism of a child in the early age. The development of two languages simultaneously at the same time also

Dialogue 3

A: Papi.... Ai Car... (father, I want to have a toy car)
B: Papi doesn't have money. Do you have money?
A: u.... (yes, I do)
B: where is it?
A: (try to get money from his pocket but actually no money at all)
B: No money, we cannot buy car....

depicted some positive achievements by the child. This research finding was similar to the previous study conducted by Genesee and Nicoladis (2005 and 2006). Morphosyntax, lexicon, and phonology were the points that became the combinations of the bilingualism effect.

According to research, language dominance may act as a mitigating factor in cross-linguistic transfer. It is possible that children may be more inclined to incorporate structures from their dominant language into their weaker language. This finding is consistent with the results of previous studies conducted by Yip & Matthews (2000) and Petersen (1988). Yip and Matthews found evidence of transfer from Cantonese to English in a Cantonese-English bilingual child during a period when Cantonese was the child's dominant language. Moreover, Matthews & Yip (2000) suggested that asynchronous development of two languages with respect to specific features (e.g., relative clause constructions in Chinese and English) may also result in the transfer of a structure that is typically acquired earlier in one language (e.g., Chinese) to the language in which the corresponding structure is typically acquired later. No changes to citations, references, or in-line citations are allowed under any circumstances. The spelling, specific terms, and phrases used in American English should be strictly adhered to. The numbers in the text should not be modified in any way.

According to Genesee (2003), studies show that bilingual children usually begin speaking their first words at the same age as monolingual children, which is between 12 and 13 months (Patterson & Pearson, 2004). Similarity in the acquisition of lexical milestones is also observed between the two groups of children. Bilingual children's vocabulary acquisition rates generally fall within the range of same-age monolinguals, provided that both languages are taken into consideration (Pearson, Fernández, & Oller, 1993). Additionally, the distribution of lexical categories in the early vocabularies of bilingual children is comparable to that of monolingual children (Nicoladis, 2001). However, the amount of time spent in each language can influence the relative vocabulary size in each language of a bilingual child. As a result, the acquisition of translation equivalents (words in each language with the same referential meaning) by bilingual children is particularly intriguing because it appears to violate the principle of mutual exclusivity. Nevertheless, evidence of bilingual children acquiring translation equivalents can be used to argue that they are acquiring two languages, not one (Patterson & Pearson, 2004).

The last issue in production studies involves children with dual language exposure who exhibit two phonological systems. The majority of research on phonological development has been conducted in the past decade, but it must be interpreted with caution due to its diverse linguistic focus and the varying ages of the children studied. Despite these limitations, the current picture suggests that bilingual children tend to display distinct patterns of development in both prosodic (such as rhythm at the syllable level) and segmental (such as phonemic discrimination at the phoneme level) phonology when compared to their monolingual counterparts (Vihman, 1996).

Conclusion

Here, the researchers concluded that a simultaneous child by the age of 2 year-old or less than 30 months can produce countable number of words and make more than 2 languages combination in a phrase or a sentence. The researchers understand that this research is far of being perfect and needs to have a further research in the future in order to have a better understanding in the language acquisition studies. The researchers hope that this article can become a reference to fulfill human's needs in making further research. There is certainly much more to be gleaned from this subject. To ensure a comprehensive understanding of a child's development during their first two years, it is vital to concentrate on early speech perception and production. Therefore, we need studies that involve larger sample sizes and provide comprehensive information about language input. By analyzing the role of input thoroughly, we can gain valuable insights. Moreover, investigating the boundaries and nature of transfer across multiple language combinations is necessary. Additionally, research is needed to understand the development of children at risk for language delay or impairment due to specific linguistic or cognitive factors. Finally, more studies are required to follow these children's development from preschool to school years.

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