

## Acquisition of Indonesian Sentences in Children's Language Development

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### Abstract

This study generally aims to investigate Indonesian sentence acquisition and use in early childhood. The data in this study was obtained from the speech of early childhood children in Wisma Kerta Village, Karangasem Regency, Bali Province. The data collection methods and techniques in this study are participation observation, listening, and recording methods, with note-taking techniques. The data are analyzed qualitatively and descriptively. The theory of language acquisition in early childhood by Brown (2007) is applied to examine sentence acquisition, and the theory of the realm of language use by Fishman (1968) is applied to analyze the use of language in various domains. The results of this study showed that early children had acquired sentence acquisitions in the form of negation sentences, interrogative sentences, and no passive voice. At the age of 5-6 years, the child was able to articulate each sound clearly. The sentences acquired were interrogative, declarative, imperative, and passive sentences. The use of language in family, neighborhood, work, and religion domains by early childhood used informal forms. The use of the Balinese language and its dialects were found in several utterances in each domain.

**Keywords:** language acquisition, Indonesian sentences, early children

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## INTRODUCTION

Language acquisition begins in childhood, when children begin to say something. The first language acquired is referred to as the mother tongue (native language). Chaer (2003) states that language acquisition is the process that takes place in the brain of a child when he acquires his first language or his mother tongue. usually, language acquisition is distinguished from language learning. Language learning is related to the processes that occur when a child learns a second language after he has acquired his first language. Sentence acquisition is one part of language acquisition related to grammar acquisition. The acquisition of sentences starts when the child is born, namely during the prelingual period. Around the age of 2 years old the child begins to produce Two-Word Speech. The child starts with two words

interspersed with a pause so that it seems as if the two words are separate. Example: To say that the lights are on, instead of saying */lampunala/* "lampa/*/nala*" with a pause between lamp and lights. This pause gets shorter until it becomes normal speech. With two words, adults can better guess what the child means because the scope of meaning is more limited. If we hear a child say */lampunala/* as exemplified above, we can better guess what the child means than if we only hear */lampa/* or */nala/*. So, unlike one-word speech, two-word speech has more complex syntax (due to the presence of two words).

There have been many studies on language acquisition and the results vary. Halimah, et al. (2018) examining the sentence acquisition of 4-5 year old children in kindergarten is one research on language acquisition. The study used nine children as research subjects and found that children at that age were able to use declarative, imperative, interrogative, and exclamative sentences to convey the message they wanted to convey. Pandudinata, et al. (2017) conducted research on language acquisition, but with different research subjects, namely children with disabilities. Pandudinata's research focused on the differences in language acquisition between normal children and mentally retarded children. The study found that severely mentally retarded children were able to understand 56 vocabulary words out of a total of 200 vocabulary words provided, and children with mild retardation were able to understand 170 vocabulary words. These studies show that until now research on Indonesian sentence acquisition is still very relevant to be done, considering that there are still many things that can be researched from language acquisition in children. Based on this, it is necessary to conduct research on the acquisition of Indonesian sentences in early childhood in a broader scope.

Sentence acquisition is closely related to language use. Language use can show how well children acquire language. The better the child acquires the language, the better the language usage will be. One way to examine language use is to use domain theory. Some experts suggest the types of language use domains, one of which is Fishman (1968) who suggests four domains of language use, namely: family, neighborhood, work, and religion. Meanwhile, Greenfield (1984) suggests five domains of language use, namely: family, kinship, religion, education, and work. This study looks at early childhood Indonesian language use in the four domains of language use proposed by Fishman, namely: family, neighborhood, work, and religion. In Wisma Kerta Village, Sidemen, Karangasem several children speak Indonesian since childhood, even since birth the child is not introduced to Balinese but Indonesian. This happened because many couples who married in recent years mostly work in the city so they are parents who predominantly use Indonesian in their daily lives. The parents also revealed that they use the Indonesian language with their children from an early age as the first language in the family environment. Parents also revealed that Indonesian is better introduced earlier than local languages because it is used in formal education so that children do not experience language confusion later. Local language is only used if the older speech partner uses local language to communicate with the child. This causes early childhood in the place to dominantly use Indonesian in communicating even though there are still local language dialects, namely Balinese on several occasions. Based on this, it is necessary to study early

childhood Indonesian language acquisition, especially sentence acquisition, its use, and the factors that influence it in Wisma Kerta Village, Sidemen, Karangasem.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach, wherein the primary data consists of linguistic data in the form of clauses and sentences, namely speech or spoken language in the form of sound recordings and images, and written data in the form of researcher notes on utterances by early childhood obtained through observation of communication activities with children.

This research was conducted in Wisma Kerta Village, Sidemen, Karangasem with units of analysis in the form of individuals, family communities, and children's play environments. The key informants in this study are six children aged 4 and 5 years old respectively who are of Balinese ethnicity and were studied for approximately 2 months. To be the subject of research on Indonesian language acquisition, the children were selected based on the physical health of the child's articulators, the child's communicative and responsive personality, speaking Indonesian with a minimum mixture of local language (Balinese), and cooperative parents. the research instruments used came from the observation method assisted by recording devices, researcher's notebooks, and stationery.

Data collection in this study were obtained through the participation of researchers in the daily lives of research subjects in the children's home environment, namely when they interact with researchers, parents, and friends to answer the problem formulation regarding speech events that occur in various language domains. Observations were carried out using note-taking techniques and recording techniques so that data were obtained in the form of researcher notes and recordings of everything important that happened during the research. The steps of data analysis in this study are as follows Reading and listening to the recorded data repeatedly, Transcribing the recorded data into writing, Classifying the findings into sentence types and various domains, Identifying the findings, Analyzing the findings, and Presenting the results of the analysis descriptively.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The acquisition of the first language becomes the focus in designing an early child's language development. Fundamentally, early childhood language development is based on the underlying assumptions that support its social culture. However, it is also important to understand that grammatical complexity in preschool children's speech occurs significantly, producing declarative, imperative, interrogative, and exclamative sentences.

### Declarative Sentences

Declarative Sentence Acquisition refers to a child's ability to produce sentences that state information, facts, or statements directly. In the context of language acquisition, declarative sentences are one of the basic forms that children acquire from the early stages of language development. Based on the theory of language development proposed by Brown (2007) in the theory of nativism, the process of acquiring declarative sentences follows certain stages in accordance with the cognitive

and linguistic development of children. The form of declarative utterances spoken by children aged 4 and 5 years is contained in the following transcripts.

### **Data 1**

Context: Mitha is enjoying dragon fruit. Ryuga came and approached Mitha.

Mitha offers dragon fruit to Ryuga.

Mitha	:	<i>"Cobain ini Yu!"</i>
		"Please, try it!"
Ryuga	:	<i>"dipotong dulu nae"</i>
		"cut it first"
Mitha	:	<i>"Udah ni, udah kecil, enak Yu?"</i>
		"already, it's small enough, Yummy?"
Ryuga	:	<i>"Dikasih susu terus diisi es baru enak"</i>
		"add some milk and ice cube it will be more delicious"

Declarative sentences are sentences used to state information, facts or opinions. In early childhood, the use of declarative sentences is often still developing, with structures that may not be perfect but still have the main function of conveying information. In the conversation between Mitha (5 years old) and Ryuga (4 years old), some sentences can be categorized as declarative sentences

In the conversational above, it is identified that the child used declarative utterances; *dipotong dulu nae* and *dikasih susu terus diisi es baru enak*. The declarative utterances are spoken by children in passive sentences. The declarative utterance does not require an answer from the speech partner. The child also used the declarative sentence to give his opinion to the speech partner. The child used the implicature mode in refusal by using the declare mode. The use of implicature mode in the communication has two purposes that the child wants to convey first Ryuga does not want to eat the fruit given and the second purpose is the child wants to say that he prefers dragon fruit that has been mixed with ice and milk.

It can be concluded that the sentence structure produced by Mitha and Ryuga is not perfect and the use of additional words that are not always needed in the formal structure of the language. With language development, children will increasingly be able to use declarative sentences more clearly and in accordance with better grammatical rules.

### **Data 2**

Context: Putri and Kinan (5 years old) are playing together on the field. They are building sandcastle.

Putri :	<i>"Aku bikin istana, kamu mau bantu nggak?"</i>
	"I make castle, do you want to help me?"
Kinan :	<i>"Iya, aku bikin pintunya ya!"</i>
	"alright, I will build the gate"
Putri:	<i>"Tapi yang besar, nae. Jangan kecil banget!"</i>
	"Please make it big, don't too small"
Kinan:	<i>"Oke, aku bikin besar. Terus aku tambah jembatan."</i>
	"Ok, I make it big. I also want to add a bridge"
Putri :	<i>"Jembatan buat apa? Kan istana nggak isi jembatan."</i>

"What's the bridge for? There's no bridge in the castle"  
 Kinan: "Jeg biar keren. Kayak di film yang ada sungainya."  
 "Jeg to be cool. Like in the movie."

Putri and Kinan (5 years old) are playing in Kinan's yard. They are building a sand castle. This conversation illustrates the interaction between two children who use declarative sentences in planning and explaining their activities. The conversation provides an overview of how children express ideas, give instructions and express opinions in the form of declarative sentences.

Based on Brown's (2007) theory, children at the age of 5 have generally developed the ability to produce more complex and complete declarative sentences. At this age, children can create declarative sentences with increasingly complete structures and use various expressions to express opinions, orders, or instructions. Children aged 5 such as Putri and Kinan begin to use declarative sentences that consist of a clear subject, predicate and object. Example sentences such as "I made the castle," "I made the door," and "I added the bridge" show their ability to express actions or plans with clear and simple sentences. In addition, Putri uses declarative sentences to give instructions or directions, such as "But big, nae. Don't be so small!" This shows that children at this age have started to give clearer and more detailed instructions. inan gave the reason why she wanted to add a bridge by saying "Jeg so it's cool. Like in the movie with the river." By age 5, children begin to develop the ability to explain the reason or purpose of their actions. The acquisition of declarative sentences in Putri and Kinan (5 years old) showed syntactic development in accordance with the stages described by Brown (2007). Both children are able to use longer and more complex declarative sentences, including declarative sentences that give instructions, explain reasons, and express plans.

### Imperative Sentences

According to Brown's (2007) theory, children's language acquisition develops through stages related to sentence structure, including imperative sentences. Imperative sentences are a type of sentence used to give orders, instructions, invitations, or prohibitions. The acquisition of imperative sentences in early childhood shows how they begin to understand the social function of language and use it to direct the actions of others. The following are transcripts of conversations when children use imperative sentences.

### Data 3

Context: During an extended family gathering, Widy sat next to Ryuga, who was having fun playing with the crab that Ryuga had gotten from the pond.

Widy	:	"Ryu, kapan mau ajak kak Idy ke sungai?"
		"Ryu, when will you invite me to the pond?"
Ryuga	:	"eee besok nae yuk!"
		"Let's go tomorrow!"
Widy	:	"Besok Kak Idy mau pulang"
		"tomorrow I will go home"
Ryuga	:	"Pulang kemana?, enggak boleh pulang!"

		"Where? You can't go!"
Widy	:	"Pulang ke Denpasar"
		"back to Denpasar"
Ryuga	:	"Kak Idy enggak boleh pulang!"
		"You can't go!"
Widy	:	"Mau pulang bawa kepitingnya Yu"
		"I will bring your crab home"
Ryuga	:	"Jangan dibawa kepitingnya, nanti mau digoreng tu sama Ibu."
		"No, don't bring it. My mom will fry it later"
Widy	:	"Tak bawa neh"
		"I will bring it"
Ryuga	:	"Jangan...!"
		"No!"

In the dialog above, it is identified that children use imperative utterances in the form of invitations in the sentence *ee besok nae yuk*. The purpose of using this imperative sentence is an invitation to the speech partner to do something in the period that the child wants. Still in the same conversation, the child uses imperative utterances in the form of prohibition, which is not allowed to go home and do not bring the crab. The purpose is to prohibit the speech partner to do something that the child does not want. In addition, there are also *nae* and *jeg* interjections used by the research subjects. The *nae* interjection in the dialog can be interpreted as a short command addressed to the speech partner. Meanwhile, the interjection *jeg* can be interpreted as an expression of annoyance. Based on the dialog, it can be concluded that the Indonesian language used by the research subject is mixed with Balinese language, namely in the use of interjections.

#### Data 4

Context: There are two kids in the living room. They are playing blocks together. They are going to make big castle.

<b>Kinan:</b>	"Dito, ayo bantu aku buat istana ini lebih tinggi!"
	"Dito, let's help me make the palace taller!"
<b>Dito :</b>	"Oke, aku taruh balok ini di atas ya?"
	"Okay, let me put this block on top, okay?"
<b>Kinan:</b>	"Iya, tapi jangan sampai jatuh!"
	"Yes, but don't fall!"
<b>Dito:</b>	"Iya, aku hati-hati."
	"Yeah, I'm careful."
<b>Kinan:</b>	"Tolong ambilkan balok yang biru!"
	"Bring me the blue block please!"
<b>Dito:</b>	"Ini dia. Terus mau diapain?"
	"This. What do you want to do with it?"
<b>Kinan:</b>	"Taruh di tengah, jangan miring!"
	"Put it in the center, don't tilt it!"
<b>Dito:</b>	"Oke, sudah!"

"Ok, It's done"  
**Kinan:** "Yeay! Istana kita jadi!"  
 "Yeay! Our castle has finished!"

According to Brown (2007), children's language develops through various stages, including the use of imperative sentences, which are used to give orders, instructions, or requests. In the dialog between Kinan and Dito, there are several examples of imperative sentences that reflect children's language development according to Brown's theory.

In this dialog, Kinan uses imperative sentences more often than Dito, which shows that the child who is more dominant in the game tends to direct the activities. In the sentence "*Dito, ayo bantu aku buat istana ini lebih tinggi!*" produced by Kinan is a direct imperative sentence with the type of invitation. This sentence contains a direct command with the word "*ayo*", which functions as an invitation. Children use straightforward language with social elements ("*ayo*") to invite their friends to work together. The use of the word "*jangan*" indicates a prohibition or negative instruction in the sentence "*Ya, tapi jangan sampai jatuh!*". This sentence is still simple, without additional explanation, but it already shows an understanding of the prohibition. In addition, in the sentence "*Tolong ambilkan balok yang biru!*" The word "*tolong*" makes the command sound more polite and in the form of a request. Kinan is beginning to understand how to ask for help in a more polite way, although it is still simple.

In this dialog, Kinan uses imperative sentences more often than Dito, which shows that the child who is more dominant in the game tends to direct the activities. Based on Brown's (2000) theory, children begin to use imperative sentences in various forms. At the age of children, imperative sentences are used with a simple structure, without too many grammatical modifications, but still effective in communication. As they get older, children will use more indirect imperatives with more polite and complex forms.

### Interrogative Sentences

The acquisition of interrogative sentences in early childhood is one of the important aspects of language development. Children at an early age (0-6 years old) gradually begin to understand and use interrogative sentences to communicate and express their curiosity. The following are transcripts of conversations when children use interrogative sentences.

#### Data 5

Context: Liana is saying goodbye to her family in the village to return to Badung. Liana approached Aga who was sitting with his father.

Liana	:	<i>"Aga, ikut ke Badung sama onti yuk"</i>
		"Aga, Let's go to Badung with me"
Aga	:	<i>"Kapan ke Badung?"</i>
		"When will you go to Badung?"
Liana	:	<i>"Sekarang lah"</i>
		"right now"
Aga	:	<i>"Ngapain kesana?"</i>

**"What will we do there?**

Liana	:	"Main ke playground"
		"Go to playground"
Aga	:	"Besok aja sama Ajik"
		"Next time with my dad"
Liana	:	"yaudah kalo gitu, daa Aga"
		"Alright then, bye Aga"

Introgative speech forms are usually characterized by the presence of question words and raised intonation. In the conversation, the research subject used the question words when and how much. The word when is used to ask the time to the speech partner. While the word how much is used to ask the amount which in the context of the conversation is nominal. However, when they want to ask for a reason, children have not been able to use the appropriate question word, namely why. Based on the dialog, the child has not been able to apply the use of question words perfectly. Questions that are not followed by a question word are often uttered by children, but still with an intonation that rises at the end.

#### **Data 6**

Context: Ryuga (4 years old) meet with his cousin, Made. Made is bringing his new toy. Ryuga wants to know about the toy.

Ryuga: " *Itu robot apa?*"  
 "What robot is that?"

Made : " *Ini namanya robot Transformer. Dia bisa berubah jadi mobil.*"  
 "It's called a Transformer robot. It can turn into a car."

Ryuga: " *Kok bisa? Gimana caranya?*"  
 "How is that possible?"

Made : " *Nah, tinggal diputar kakinya terus dilipat tangannya.*"  
 "Well, just rotate the legs and fold the arms."

Ryuga: " *Iya! Kalau berubah jadi robot lagi gimana?*"  
 "Yes! What about turning into a robot again?"

Made : " *Tinggal diputer aja gini.*"  
 "Just turn it around like this."

Ryuga: " *Emang robotnya beli dimana?*"  
 "Where did you buy the robot?"

Made : " *Mamaku beli di shopee.*"  
 "My mom bought it from shopee."

Interrogative sentences are sentences used to ask questions. According to the theory of child language acquisition, 4-year-olds like Ryuga have started to use various types of interrogative sentences, although the structures are still simple and sometimes do not fully follow standard grammar. Based on the conversation data between Ryuga (4 years old) and Made, Ryuga asked several questions that can be categorized based on the types of interrogative sentences.

Ryuga produces interrogative sentences that aim to ask for information about the robot being discussed. Word order is still simple, often putting the question word

at the end of the sentence "*Itu robot apa?*" This pattern is common in children who are in the syntactic development stage. In addition, Ryuga also produces interrogative sentences with cause and effect and procedural question types in the sentence "*Kok bisa? Gimana caranya?*". Ryuga began to use questions to explore cause-and-effect relationships even though the structures were still simple and often used informal forms. In the sentence "Where did you buy the robot?" shows the child's ability to produce interrogative sentences with questions about the location of the robot. In addition, the use of the word "*emang*" as an emphasis shows that children are starting to understand how to express curiosity more strongly. The sentences are still in the informal form typical of children.

From this conversation, Ryuga uses several types of interrogative sentences, namely Information, Cause and Effect, Procedural, and Location questions. The characteristics of interrogative sentences in 4-year-olds seen in this data are The structure is still simple, Using informal forms such as "*gimana*" and "*emang*", Showing high curiosity, especially in cause-and-effect and procedural concepts and Combining questions in one sentence to explore the topic further. As they get older, children will increasingly be able to form more complex and grammatical interrogative sentences according to more formal language rules.

## CONCLUSION

Conclusively, the acquisition of Indonesian sentences in childhood aged 5-6 years, children begin to use a series of speech sounds that have meaning, namely the child's vocabulary begins to develop rapidly and contains a complete sentence concept. At the age of 5-6 years the grammatical complexity of children's speech occurs in significant ways: increasing the complexity of phrases and being able to produce interrogative sentences, declarative sentences, and imperative sentences (commands). Indonesian remained the first language of the study subjects in conversations in all domains although it was influenced by dialect and accompanied by the use of Balinese. In all domains, children used non-formal language and no formal speech was found during the research. In the family domain, the use of Balinese or its dialect was found in some conversations, namely, *nae* and *jeg*.

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