Children Indirect Speech Acts at Ages 18-24 Months Old: A Case Study on Indonesian Language Acquisition by Balinese Children

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Abstract

The research aims at formulating language characteristic and development of children indirect speech acts at age 18-24 months old. The research data is hoped to be able to contribute to a theoretical implication in semantic and pragmatic aspects of children language. The research is based on speech acts, implicature, and language acquisition theory which were constructed eclectically. Research data was collected in a natural setting through some methods as listening, conversation, and participative observation in collaboration with stimulating technique. Main corpus obtained was analyzed in units of utterance with method of pragmatic. There were three points successfully drawn upon the analysis, they are: (1) consonant sound acquiring pattern was consistent with "principle of maximal contrast"; (2) words were generally presented into monosyllabic words, even though they are polysyllabic ones, and represent "semantic primitives"; (3) children were able to comprehend early than they were able to produce speech acts, which is in line with their cognitive and social development; and (4) children have implicative ability, i.e. differentiating what is said and what is meant.

Key Words: pragmatics, indirect speech acts, implicature, semantic primitives.

1. Introduction

Studies on children language acquisition has been undertaken in different languages. Brown and Bellugi (1964) investigated process of mastering English sentences; Tantra (1992) researched comprehension and production of children Balinese language directive speech act at age 6-8 years; Oesterreich (1999) studied the development of children English language; Dawdjowidjojo (2000) analyzed the acquisition of children Indonesian language at age 5 years; Sankaranarayanan (2003) investigated the use of language in adult-children interaction in India; Pinker (2003) researched acquisition of language with syntax focus; and Arnawa (2005) researched children Balinese language semantic development at age 4-6 years.

Pursuant to literary review undertaken, research on children language acquisition is generally initiated from grammatical aspect and very less from semantics. The research focusing on both aspects was underlined on Saussure's linguistic dichotomy that language comprises of form and meaning (Hidayat, 1988:13). Thus, there is a lot of children's language development, including phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon, as well as semantic feature. From various researches on grammatical and semantic aspects, it was found linguistic idiosyncrasy as a universal children language feature.

In line with linguistic theory development, Owens (1992:15) stated that language is not only comprised by form and meaning but also pragmatic aspect, i.e. language use. His insight is relevant to Morris' linguistic subdivision that language is a symbol system including syntactical, semantic, and pragmatic aspects. Syntactical aspect discusses relations between symbols; semantic aspect discusses relation between symbols and their meaning; and pragmatic aspect discusses relation between symbols and their use (Nababan, 1987:4). Related to research one children language development, pragmatic aspect shall be reviewed that data related to children language acquisition can be more comprehensive. Pursuant to concept developed by Owens, research on pragmatic development of children language has been undertaken by linguists. Generally, children acquire language through conversation with adults around them.

Children conversation generally has semantic feature 'here and now' (Owen, 1992; Dardjowidjojo, 2003) and entering end of 2 year old, children would have had ability to respond to short conversation. Chaer (2003:228) explained that at the of sensory motor period children would be able to think about world to state their experience and simple action that in this phase, children are assumed to be able to comprehend and produce indirect speech acts. The research was undertaken to justify and give empirical explanation to the hypothesis on children speech acts development.

The urgency of the children speech acts in purpose to reach two main goals: (1) to give explanation above grammatical and semantic that children language totality can be comprehended through and based on empirical data; (2) study on the use of language can be utilized as a basis for comprehending children cognitive and social development, where both aspects generally presented through characteristic of language used by children.

2. Literature Review and Theory Construction

2.1 Literature Review

Research on pragmatic aspect of children language has been attracting linguists' attention from different research perspective. Bucciarelli, Colle, and Bara (2003) reported their research result of speech acts comprehension and children communicative gesture. Through the research, it was evidenced that there was a gradation of children comprehension and production of speech acts that they used communicative gesture. Kushartanti (2009) researched politeness aspect and stated that children language politeness in Indonesia in line with their process of language mastery. They generally use positive politeness with different ways in accordance with participants, age and social distance, particularly when they express their willingness. Research on children speech acts reported by Yuniarti (2010), Prayitno (2011), and Handayani (2012).

Yuniarti (2010) reported children comprehension of directive speech act at pre-school age. It was found that when refusing or accepting children tended to use verbal and nonverbal methods followed by minimizing negative face threat strategies. Rayitno (2011) reported his research result on technique and strategies of directive politeness acts of elementary school students with background of Javanese culture. The research found that (1) directive politeness acts tended to be realized through acts of ordering and requesting; (2) directive politeness act realization tended to be expressed with direct and indirect method and non-literal modus better that direct method or literal modus; (3) directive politeness acts was made up of loss and benefit scale and direct and indirect scale so that it could not cover scale of choice and option; (4) social harmony as a cultural principle used by elementary school student with Javanese culture had shortage of interaction on politeness strategies of Javanese culture, such as *kurmat* or honorific, *andhap asor* or low profile, *empan papan* or aware of situation or introspective, *tepa slira* or respectful. Handayani (2012) fond that elementary school students made refusal acts by verbal language and gesture. Refusals were done by direct and indirect speech acts both literal and non literal.

The researches above were undertaken with cross sectional method in speech community of school student. The research is triangulation of methodology and subject. The research was done longitudinally in a family interaction on child who started to acquire language. The research would evidence that children's pragmatic performance develops in line with their linguistic competence.

2.2 Theoretical Construction

The grand theory underlying the research is the speech acts theory. It is supported with other relevant theories, such as conversational implicature and language acquisition theory. The first and the second theory were used to give scientific description to children utterances from aspect of locutionary acts and illocutionary acts; language acquisition theory was used as a reference to explain development of children utterances as a part of language mastering process. The relevance of the three theories is diagrammatically visualized as follows.
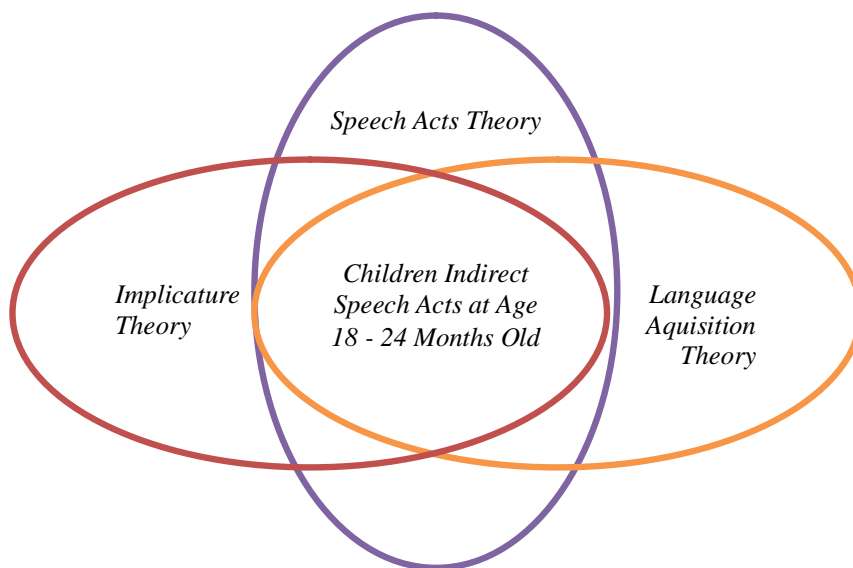
Diagram 1: Theory Construction

Speech acts theory was formally introduced by Austin (1962). He stated that in uttering things, one is not only saying thing but also doing things. There is a number of acts that can only be done by saying things; such as promising. The act of promising will only occur through utterance. One can impossibly do act of promising unless he or she such thing. Such a use of utterance to do things differentiates language acts than other physical acts; such as sweeping and driving, done without doing things. The concept was then developed by Searle (1977) by stating that there are three acts in one speech act, they are locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary acts. Locutionary act is an act to state something; illocutionary act is used to do something; and perlocutionary act states an effect or impact of utterance to hearers (Wijana, 1996). Based on relation of modus with function of utterance, speech act is divided into direct and indirect speech act. Direct speech act occurs when utterance modus and its function is correlated, while indirect speech act occurs when utterance modus and its function is not correlated. Relation between modus and function of utterance can be visualized in the following table.

No	Modus	Function	
		Direct speech act	**Indirect speech act**
1	Informative	To inform	To request, to ask
2	Question	To ask	To ask, to request
3	Command	To command	To inform, to ask

Apart from modus-function relation, speech act can also be divided based on word choices used. Nababan (1987) and Levinson (1983) termed it literal force hypothesis. According to the hypothesis, speech act can be divided into literal and non literal speech act (Grundy, 2000). Literal speech act occurs when the word choice used has same meaning with the intention of utterance, while non literal speech act occurs when the word choice used has different meaning and or converses the utterance meaning. Combination of both indicators results in: (1) literal direct speech act; (2) no literal direct speech act; (3) literal in direct speech act; and (4) non literal indirect speech act. The research focused on in direct speech act construction, both literal and non literal comprehended and used by children at 18 – 24 months old.

Development of children language at 18-24 months old was very dynamic. Even though its utterance structure is not considered complete (pivot grammar) its utterances' meaning is comprehensible. In some cases, children in the period of sensory motor frequently produce utterance having different meaning from what they really mean. To explain the lingual phenomenon, the research was based on theory of conversational implicature developed by Grice (Nababan, 1987; Levinson, 1983; Grundy, 2000). The theory could explain difference of utterance uttered from its meaning where interlocutor comprehended the utterance. Differences between that uttered and meant in an utterance were developed by Leech (1983) to be a pragmatic postulate. It is referred to explain in direct utterance construction of children aged 18 – 24 months old. Development of children language at 18 – 24 months old was closely related to language acquisition.

Chaer (2003) introduced three hypotheses on language acquisition: they are the innateness hypothesis, blank slate hypothesis, and cognitive world width hypothesis supported by syntactic and semantics acquisition. Theory of syntactic and semantic acquisition could explain utterance construction which can be comprehended and produced by children of 18-24 months old and its relationship with social and linguistic context children really face.

3. Research Method

The research was designed with qualitative research paradigm i.e. to investigate and comprehend things behind a phenomenon (Strauss and Corbin, 2003). The research subject was three children: Gita (a girl born on 2nd October 2013), Alika (a girl born on 17th September 2013), and Arjun (a boy born on 25 December 2013). The three children were grown in bilingual environment of Balinese and Indonesian. Research data was collected in a natural setting through children - adult interaction in intimate situation. Data was collected with method of observation, interview, and note taking (Mashun, 2007). The data collecting method used stimulating technique. Note taking was done with phonetic and phonemic transcription so that ethic and emic principle can be represented (Gunarwan, 2002). Data collecting was done for 6 months, from April – October 2015. The activity was done regularly, that is every Monday for 10 – 20 minutes. There were 24 observations overall for each research subject. Observation was done with a participative technique, where the researcher took parts in plays designed. Core corpus was obtained by selecting the data based on research goal.

The selected data was coded containing abbreviation of research subject, number of recording, and day of recording, for example Gt1, 3-4-2016 (the first recoding of Gita's on 3 April 2015). Core corpus was analyzed with pragmatic comparing method (Sudaryanto, 1993) Analysis was done in a unit of utterance or a speech act.

4. Research Result

4.1 Characteristic of Children Utterances at Age 18-24 Months Old

There were two things referred to describe children's utterance characteristic, they were vocabulary and utterance length average. Vocabulary was seen as the semantic representation. It is necessary to explain language development happened on children because basically prior to their speech devices were able to produce utterance they have had semantic aspect (Maksan, 1993). Children language development in this period is characterized two main aspects. First, children vocabulary construction generally represented with one syllable, although the words intended to express was polysyllabic, as most of vocabularies in Indonesian language. The pronunciation of polysyllabic words into monosyllabic words took place until they are 20 months. After children are 20 months old, they start to be able to utter two- syllabic words, such as *baju* 'shirt', *meja* 'table', *papa* 'father', *mama* 'mother'. The two syllabic words generally started with labial and nasal consonant. At 20 months old, three syllabic words are still pronounced with two syllabic words, like [*peda*] /*sepeda*/ 'bicycle', [*patu*] /*sepatu*/ 'shoes'. Even though they are able to utter two syllabic words, but their lexical production were still dominated with monosyllabic words. Syllable pronounced were generally located at the end of words. The use of final syllable as representation of lexicon on children was in line with their cognitive development, i.e. at 18-24 months old they could memorize a lot easier the last syllable they hear (Dardjowidjojo, 2000). In addition, in Indonesian language, syllabic pattern stress is generally located at the end of word. The fact was used as linguistic strategy by children added 18-24 months old when producing lexicon. The following data situation is represented to explain children language condition.

Table 2: Children vocabulary production at age 18-24 months old

No	Classification	Words
1	Terms in relatives	[pa] /papa/ 'father', [ma] /mama/ 'mother', [yang] /niyang/ 'grand mother'
2	Body parts	[yut] /perut/ 'stomach', [ŋan] /tangan/ 'hand'
3	Number	[tu] /satu/ 'one', [wa] /dua/ 'two'
4	Daily activities	[di] /mandi/ 'take a bath' [duk] /duduk/ 'sit', [∂m] /maem/ 'eat'
5	Things	[tu] /buku/ 'book', [ja] /meja/ 'table', [pu] /sapu/ 'sweep, [peda] /sepeda/ 'bicycle', [patu], /sepatu/ 'shoes', [dela] /jendela/ 'window'
6	Pets	[ciŋ] /kucing/ 'cat', [jiŋ] /anjing/ 'dog', [yam] /ayam/ 'chicken'.
7	Color	[yah] /merah/ 'red', [tam] /hitam/ 'black', [tih] /putih/ 'white'

Second, from semantic point of view, children vocabulary at age 18-24 months old are characterized with semantic primitives around them.

Semantic primitives are the semantic core from a lexical. The core, by adult, is used as a basis to derive meaning of words. For instance, children at age 18-24 month old was able to used word [yat] /lihat/ meaning 'see' but they were not able to use the word *lirik* 'glance', *tengok* 'look' , *pandang* 'look', *tatap* 'stare' which are derivation of *lihat*. The linguistic phenomenon proves that *natural semantics meta-language* theory developed by Wierzbicka (1996) is justifiable.

Mean length of utterance of children can be used as an indicator to determine their syntactical competence development. Children utterance at age 18-24 months old is dominated with one-word utterance and only slight two-word utterance. The following is sample of children utterance at the concerned age.

a. one-word utterance (represented with monosyllabic words)

[di] /mandi/ 'take bath'
[bu] /bubuk/ 'sleep'
[in] /main/ 'play'
[gi] /pergi/ 'go'
[ŋan] /jangan/ 'do not do it'
[ton] /nonton/ 'watch'
[tuh] /jatuh/ 'fall'
[cah] /pecah/ 'break'

b. Two-word utterance (every word is represented with monosyllabic words)

[ik biŋ] /naik mobil/ 'take car'
[ik toŋ] /naik motor/ 'take motor cycle'
[li nan] /beli mainan/ 'buy toy'
[mik cu] /mimik susu/ 'drink milk'
[u duk] /mau duduk/ 'want to sit'
[yat pu] /lihat kupu-kupu/ 'see butterfly'

Mean length of utterance was known by counting number of words from 100 sentences taken randomly. Then the number of words found is divided by 100 (Brown, 1973; Dardjowidjojo, 2003). Based on the counting it was known that mean length of children utterance at age 18-24 months old was 1, 36. The length showed syntactical competence aged 18-24 months old is at phase of holophrase development in accordance with the following interpretation guidance.

Table 3: Children Utterance Length Interpretation Guidance

RPU	Development Phase	Language Development Phase
1,00-2,00	I	Holophrase
2,00-2,50	II	Telegraphic
2,50-3,00	III	Development of grammar
3,00-3,75	IV	Grammar prior to adult
3,75-4,50	V	Complete linguistic competence

(Dardjowidjojo, 2000 and Tarigan, 1985)

Vocabulary characteristic and mean length of utterance of children aged 18-24 months old could also be seen in speech acts construction they produced.

4.2 Children Indirect Speech Act at Age 18 – 24 Months Old

Data and its analysis on children indirect speech acts at age18-24 months old was divided into two parts. First, comprehension of speech acts and second, production of speech acts. The division is necessary to do as comprehending and producing process of utterance involves different cognition (Tantra, 1992).

Children pragmatic development generally occurs in contexts of conversation with adults, so is speech acts comprehension. Comprehension of indirect speech act of children aged 18-24 months old is closely related to their ability to perceive utterance. The ability is also closely related to the ability to arrange voice heard in the form of words and sentences. Clark and Clerk (1997) identify comprehending utterances from two sides: (1) comprehending the heard utterance; (2) comprehension related to acts required up on the comprehension occurred. Look at the following data.

Conversation 1 (Data code: Gt2, 10-4-2015)
Context : Gita is playing, and unintentionally touched her milk can.
Researcher   : *Gita, susumu tumpah* 'Gita, you spill the milk'.
Gita   : (no answer, but she took the falling milk can).

Conversation 2 (Data code: Al3, 18-4-2015)
Context : Alika was playing. There was a doll not far from him. The researcher didn't see the doll intentionally.
Researcher   : *Alika, di mana bonekanya?* 'Alika where is the doll?'
Alika   : (no answer , but she took the doll for me)

Conversation 3 (Data code: Arl, 5-4-2015)
Context : Arjun was playing a toy car. His ball was rolling to another room.
Researcher   : *Arjun, bolamu hilang!* 'Arjun, your ball is lost!'
Arjun   : (no answer, he was busy looking for his ball, although not found him .

Conversation 4 (Data code: Gt4, 24-4-2015)
Context : Gita's father wanted to play sport.
Researcher   : *Bapaknya mau sepatu apa?* 'What shoes does your father want ?'
Gita   : (no answer, immediately took her father's sport shoes).

In conversation 1, researcher utterance modus is information or news, but functions as a command. In conversation 2, 3, and 4, the utterance modus used was question which also functions as a command. Thus, the utterance modus in conversation 1 until 4 was not in accordance with its function, and there for it is considered indirect speech acts. Based on the lexicon used, conversation 1 until 4 use words which are in line with their intention, therefore, all utterances in those conversations are considered literal speech acts. Based on linguistic facts, all utterances in conversation 1 until 4 are indentified as literal indirect speech acts. Based on acts given, the three research subjects could give response correctly. Based on linguistic fact and referring Clark and Clark's (1997) concept, it could be recognized that children aged 18-24 months old could comprehend literal indirect speech acts which were represented with acts apart from their being unable to produce them.

Since 20 months old, children are able to produce direct speech acts as shown in the following conversations.

Conversation 5 (Data code Gt11, 18-7-2015)
Context: Gita was afraid of a statue. Gita was invited to play a ball. The ball was passed and entered boutique room where statues were placed
Gita's father   : *Ambil bolanya, Gita!* 'Can you take the ball, Gita!'
Gita   : [da tung] /ada patung/ 'there is a statue'.

Conversation 6 (Data code: Ar12, 24-7-2015)
Context: Arjun just want to eat with an egg. To trigger his utterance, he was offered a chicken.
Arjun's mother : *Arjun, ayo makan!* 'Arjun, let's eat!'
Arjun   : [au lul] /mau telor/ 'I want egg'.

Conversation 7 (Data code: Al10, 11-7-2015)
Context : It's Alika's nap time.
Alika's mother : *Sudah waktunya bobok* 'It's time to take nap'
Alika   : [ik toŋ] /naik motor/ 'take the motor to go around'

Conversation 8 (Data code Gt22, 19-8-2015)
Context: Gita's mother persuades her to sleep.
Gita's Mother   : Gita has to take nap now. I'll buy you VCD this afternoon.
Gita   : Two our latter Gita got up. Gita said [*Ta dah bobok*] /Gita sudah bobok/. 'Gita had taken a nap'.

Conversation 9 (Data code Ar21, 11-8-2015)
Context : Arjun's father wanted to go to the office. Arjun wanted to join him.
Arjun's mother : *Arjun, entar jadi beli donat?* 'Arjun, do you still want to buy donut latter?'
Arjun   : [tol ja] /Pistol saja/ 'Just a pistol instead'.

In conversation 5, modus and function, words and the utterance meaning used by Gita's father are correlated. Therefore, the speech uttered was considered as literal direct speech acts. However, Gita answered with non literal indirect speech, e.g. [da tuŋ] /ada patung/ 'there is a statue' which intended to say that Gita refused to take the ball. In utterance of conversation 6, utterance of Arjun's mother is classified into literal direct speech acts. Arjun answered with non literal indirect speech; since his mother talked about meal (by offering chicken), while Arjun answered with utterance [au lul] /mau telur/ 'I want egg' in purpose to refuse to have chicken for the meal. In conversation 7, Alika's mother used literal indirect speech act as modus of statement or informative sentence was used to make a command. Alika answered with non literal indirect speech act [it toŋ] /Naik motor/ 'take motor bike to go around' to refuse being commanded to take a nap. In conversation 8, Gita's mother promised to buy her a VCD after she took a nap. The promise was embodied in the form of literal direct speech act. After getting up, Gita said [ta dah bobok] /Gita sudah bobok/ 'Gita had taken a nap' in purpose to ask her mother to do her promise to buy her a VCD. Thus, Gita's utterance is classified into non literal indirect speech act. In conversation 9 , Arjun's mother also promised by making utterance with modus of literal direct speech act, but Arjun answered with [tol ja] /pistol saja/ 'just a pistol' which was identified as a non literal in direct speech act in purpose to refuse to buy a donut.

5. Analysis

At the age of 18 – 24 months, old children organ of speech is able to produce vocal sound, but it is not able to produce consonant sound of Indonesian language perfectly. There are a number of consonant sounds they successfully utter, such as [p, b, m, t, d, c, and j]. The success in producing consonant sounds is in line with principle of maximal contrast, i.e. children choose consonant sound whose articulator manifestation is contradictive. Consonant [p], [b], [m] are bilabial consonant, but [p] is unvoiced oral and [b] voiced oral; [m] is nasal consonant, that the three consonants are contrast one another. Consonant [t] and [d] are both dental consonant, but [t] is unvoiced and [d] is voiced. Consonant [c] and [j] are both palatal, but [t] is unvoiced and [j] is voiced.

Words in Indonesian language are generally polysyllabic. However, children at age 18-24 months old generally represent it with one syllable (monosyllable). Children generally use the last syllable as words representation, such as [duk] /duduk/ 'sit', [ja] /meja/ 'table', [tam] /hitam/ 'black'. In terms of vocabulary, children can be given the following explanation. (1) the words mastered are representation of semantic prime which will be used to derive other meaning of word. The semantics primitive is the simplest meaning which is firstly mastered by children. (2) the use of last syllable was triggered by two things; they are (a) Indonesian language intonation tends to be given at the end of word that the last syllable is easily perceived by the children, (b) influence of other language environment. The research was undertaken on children in acquisition of Indonesian language in Balinese language environment. In colloquial or not official Balinese language, adult speakers always make contraction. In making contraction, they tend to maintain the last syllable, such as *tusing* becomes *sing* 'no', *tidong* becomes *dong* 'not', *jalan* becomes *lan* 'let's go', *suba* becomes *ba* 'already'.

Mean length of utterance of children aged 18-24 months old was 1, 36. The fact showed development of children language was at holophrase phase. The competence is showed with domination of one-word sentences they produced. Related to their cognitive development, children at this age are at sensory motor phase, i.e. response given were mostly acts as reaction to their environment, including language environment. Thus, a lot of utterances were responded with action. This can be seen that children in this age responded indirect speech acts with actions. The fact also proves that children could comprehend indirect speech acts. In addition, children could produce literal indirect speech act and non literal indirect speech acts even though with a simple organ of speech. The fact also proved that children could perceive speech context as a basis to interpret meaning of utterance. The competence grew in line with their social development where they always want to adapt with their environment. A child has ability of implicature, i.e. comprehend what is being said and what is meant. Growth of implicature ability is in line with children growth of communicative interest as representation of their social development (see Dardjowidjojo, 2000).

6. Conclusion

Development of literal indirect speech acts and non literal indirect speech acts on children at age 18-24 months old was a part of children language acquisition which subject to their development phases, including their cognitive development.

Comprehension and production of literal and non literal indirect speech act was representation of semantic and pragmatic process that children could understand and differentiate between what is being said and what is meant even though their organ of speech could not produce normal sound of language. The fact proved that semantic and pragmatic acquisition shall not wait a moment when children organ of speech could produce speech sound. Children could feel their communicating need with shortage of ability in producing speech sound.

7. Expression of Gratitude

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