

**Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**

**University of Babylon**

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## **The One Word Stage in Child Language Acquisition**

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ (1) خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ

مِنْ عَلَقٍ (2) اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ (3) الَّذِي عَلَّمَ

بِالْقَلَمِ (4) عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ (5)

صدق الله العلي العظيم

سورة العلق

الآية (1-5)

## **Dedication**

**To my wonderful parents who have supported me to be the person I am today.**

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1.1 The Problem

Children are not taught language. But, they acquire much of the lexicon and rules from the language around them. Child language acquisition proceeds in stages. These stages are universal as they are similar for all children. This paper will answer the following questions: 1-What is language acquisition?

1. How language is acquired ?
2. What are the characteristics of child language acquisition?
3. What are the stages of Child language acquisition?
4. What is the one -Word stage in child language acquisition?

### 1.2 Aims

This research aims to study the stages of child language acquisition especially the one word stage in child language acquisition and how to acquire the ability to perceive and understand language.

### 1.3 Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that there are four stages in child language acquisition and the second one is the one - word stage.

### 1.4 Procedures

Presenting a theoretical study about child language acquisition, its characteristics, and the stages whereby the child acquires his language.

### 1.5 Limits

This paper is limited to the study of the stages in child language in general and the one word stage in child language acquisition in particular.

### 1.6 Value

The present study is hoped to be of significance for the learners and to pave the way for further research in this regard.

## Chapter Two

### The One Word Stage in Child Language Acquisition

#### 2.1 Language Acquisition

Language acquisition is meant the process whereby children achieve a fluent control of their native language (Varshney, 2003:307). The ability to get and understand the language is inherited genetically but the particular language that children speak is culturally and environmentally transmitted to them. Children all over the world acquire their first language without tutoring. Whereas, a child exposed to speak to an English speaking community begins to speak English fluently, the other one exposed to a community of Arabic speakers, begins to use Arabic fluently. Language acquisition thus appears to be different in kind from the acquisition of other skill such as swimming, dancing, or gymnastics.

According to Chomsky (2009:101-102), language acquisition is a matter of growth and maturation of relatively fixed capacities, under appropriate external conditions. The form of Acquisition and use of language the language that is acquired is largely determined by internal factors because of the fundamental correspondence of all human languages, because of the fact that "human beings are the same, wherever they may be", that a child can acquire any language. The functioning of the language capacity is, furthermore, optimal at a certain "critical period of intellectual development. In addition to that, the term "language acquisition is normally used without qualification for the process which results in the knowledge of one's native language (or native languages). It is conceivable that the acquisition of a foreign language whether it is learned systematically at school or not, proceeds in a quite different way. Indeed, as we have seen, the acquisition of one's native language after the alleged 'critical age' for language acquisition may differ, for neurophysiological reasons, from the normal child's acquisition of his native language. (Lyons, 1981:252).

So , According to Fromkin (1983: 326), we can notice the differences between Acquisition and Learning :

Acquisition	Learning
1.Gradual development 2.It happens naturally. 3.It happens through interaction with the ones who are native speakers. 4.Focus is on meaningful communication not on grammatical forms.	1.Conscious process 2.Grammar, vocabulary and rules are learnt .in controlled manner 3.It happens in schools, colleges and so on. 4.Activities and methods are designed. Focus is on grammar.

**Acquisition** / In walking no one teaches the child to walk but he is able to (walk. normal child).

**Learning** / In reading If a child is not taught to read, he is not able to read.

We know that walking is a process of acquisition. All children are able to walk without any instruction and tutoring or no one teaches them to walk.) Reading is a learning process because he/she is taught to read so that he/she is able to read. As we know many people all over the world are not able to read because they are not taught to do so.

This brings us to the question of (How language is acquired)

As Bolinger (2002:3) said that, acquiring a language calls for three things:

1.Predispositions, as well as physical capacities, developed through countless centuries of natural selection ; People have capacities for communicating in a human way uniquely and capacities for acting such as breathing, grasping and crying.

2.A preexisting language system, any one of the many produced by the cultures of the world; Language persists through time and from speaker to speaker. We are not born with an instinct to learn language such as



English, Indonesian or Chinese but we learn a language as members of the society, or we want to understand that society, or to be understood by that speech community. It means that if a language is not used in any society, it dies out.

3.A competence that comes from applying the predispositions and capacities to the system through the relatively long period during which the child learns both to manipulate the physical elements of the system, Such as sounds and words and grammatical rules, and to permeate them with meaning : A child must learn the rules before use the language creatively .

## **2.2.Child Language Acquisition**

Parents do not teach the native language to their children formally. Although they may try to reinforce their child's verbal behavior with smiles or other ways or through the gap between their mature linguistic competence and the child's beginning by means of "baby talk". But, there is no particular reason to believe that such ability appears on the child's final achievement in becoming a native speaker of his parents language: children can pick up a language like playing a game with other children to extend their language abilities. The specific environmental factors that make it possible for language acquisition to occur, but the primary element would appear to be merely sufficient exposure to language use in a social context. Children seem to learn language they way they learn to walk. They learn thousands of words, complex phonological and grammatical structures, semantic and pragmatic relations. As Fromkin (1983:326) said that we do not enter the world before we are able to stand and walk, but all normal children begin to do so at around the same age. No one teaches them to walk. Obviously "learning to walk" or learning language is different than "learning to read" or "learning to ride a bicycle".

Language acquisition is the process whereby children achieve a fluent control of their native language (Varshney, 2003:307). Children acquire a language, not because they are subjected to a similar conditioning process, but because they posses an inborn capacity which permits them to acquire a language as a normal maturational process. This capacity is

universal. The child has an innate language acquiring device. He acquires a language by exposure to it in society and by unconsciously forming certain hypothesis about language, which he goes on modifying till he comes to the adult model to which he is for the most part exposed. So, the child goes on constructing an innate grammar, operating over generalized rules. The capacity for acquiring language is remarkable a number of reasons (Langacker, 1973:12-13). It is first because of its uniformity throughout the human race. There simply are no cases of normal human children who, given the chance, fail to acquire a native language. The ability of children at such young age to form complex rules, to construct the grammars of spoken and sign languages, and to do in such a relatively short time is indeed phenomenal. The fact that the stages through which a child learns a language of different nations reveals interesting aspects of the acquisition process (Fromkin, 1983:341). From this, we know that it is impossible that the child passing suddenly from one stage to another. In addition to that, as universal there are some stages in acquiring the native language. They are the cooing stage, the babbling stage, the holophrastic stage, the two word stage, and the telegraph stage. As Fromkin (Ibid:326)states that children do not wake up one morning with a fully formed grammar in their heads or with all the "rules" of social and communicative intercourse. The language is acquired by the stages and, it is suggested, every successive stage more closely near to the grammar of the adult language.

### **2.3 Stages in Child Language Acquisition**

When human are born, he does not have suddenly the grammatical of language in his brain and completely with rules. The native language is acquired through some stages, There are four stages in children 's language acquisition, namely.

#### **1.Babbling Stage (6-8 months)**

Babbling is the sounds which infants produce as consonant-vowel combinations, Steinberg (2003:147).

The sounds which are produced by infants but not all the speech sounds are same in language of the world such as [ma-ma-ma] or [da-da-da] and [ba-ba-ba] or [na-na-na].

## **2. The One Word Stage or Holophrastic Stage (9-18 months)**

holophrastic comes from holo "complete" or "undivided" plus phrase "phrase" or 'sentence. So holophrastic is the children's first single word which represent to a sentence. Children use one word to express a particular emotional state. For example, Debby's mother recorded the words she had pronounced during the 8 months after the appearance of her first word at 9 months (this was [adi], used both for her "daddy") During the two weeks from 17 months - 17 months and a half, she more than doubled her vocabulary. (Formkin, 1983:328).

## **3. The two-word stage (18-24 months)**

Two-word stage is the mini sentences with simple semantic relations. Children begin to form actual two-word sentences, with the relations between the two words showing definite syntactic and semantic relations and the intonation contour of the two words extending over the whole utterance rather than being separated by a pause between the two words. The following "dialogue" illustrates the kinds of patterns that are found in the children's utterances at this stage. Basically, a child at this age is already able to produce the consonant sounds like [i], [p], [b], [d], [l], [m], and [n]. (Ibid:329).

## **4. Telegraphic stage (24-30 months).**

Telegraphic is merely a descriptive term because the child does not deliberately leave out the non-content words, as does an adult sending a telegram. When the child begins to produce utterances that are longer than two words, these utterances appear to be "sentence-like"; they have hierarchical, constituent structures similar to the syntactic structures found in the sentences produced by adult grammar. (Ibid:330).

## 2.4 The One Word Stage in Child Language Acquisition

As pointed above, after going through a stage called babbling, children will produce reduplicated syllables, and finally they will start uttering their first understandable words, a stage that all mothers are anxiously waiting for. Children's earliest speech consists of one word utterances. Elliot (1981: 90) claims that it is common for children to pass through an early period when most of their utterances consist of a single word. Many of the utterances carry out conventional performatives like greetings or vocatives.

This stage is commonly called the one-word stage or the holophrastic stage. It means that children express a complete sentence in one word only. At this point, Fromkin (2000: 325) states, children seem to know not only what a word is, but also what makes up a word from the morphological structure of their language. Elliot (1981: 90) further maintains that holophrastic speech has a "pivotal status" in language development: it marks the start of what we know as speech, in the way that it is vocalized or uttered, an advance from the cries and gestures the days before.

If we say the child is using one word as part of an economical communicative act over which he/she has control, we are making a more appropriate statement than saying that the child has knowledge of the full sentence that he/she produces in a single element. Referring to the above question (if we assume for a moment that a full sentence underlies the child's single word, do we assume that the word expresses the whole sentence or only part of it?), we can find the answer explained by Elliot based on researches done by three linguists, De Laguna, Leopold, and Nelson: (Ibid: 91)

De Laguna (1927), Leopold (1949), and Nelson (1974) emphasize how nebulous and indefinite the child's early concepts are, and so they could argue that for the child at this stage, word and sentence are one. De Laguna argued that it was important not just to consider the word the child expressed but also the gestures with which he accompanied the utterance and other aspects of the context of utterance. Children make use of the context of utterance to expand their expressive power.

It is the child's gestures and the context of utterance that accompany the single-word utterance that enable caretakers to fully understand the child's intended sentences, though these sentences are expressed in the form of holophrases. Despite the lack of perfect sentence structure that a child has, he/she is trying to communicate his/her desires or wants through these single words. Children are trying to express what they have in mind.

### Some words for the eighteen -month Girl's Holophrases

<b>Words</b>	<b>Situations</b>
dad	as father enters the room.
down	as child sits down.
door	as father closes the door.
here	as child points.
mama	as child gives mother something.
again	as child watches lighting of a match.

## Chapter Three

### Conclusion

All normal children everywhere acquire language. This ability is not dependent on social class, geography, race and even Intelligence (with a normal range This ability is uniquely human).

As far as child language acquisition is concerned, there are certain stages of language acquisition during the child's first months and years though the capacity to speak is inherent in everyone. Naturally, the child is not born with a fully formed grammar in his head or with all the rules of communicative and social intercourse. Rather, he acquires his language through certain stages.

One of these stages is the one-word stage, also known as the holophrastic stage, is the second major phase in child language acquisition. It directly follows the babbling stage, typically occurring at the age of 12 to 18 months, and characterised by the use of single words. At this point, infants have acquired a handful of convenient words to get attention, call for something, or simply interact with those around them. It is the child's gestures and the context of speech accompanying the single word that enable caretakers to fully understand the intended sentences of the child, even though these are expressed in the form of sentences .

Although the child does not have an ideal sentence structure, he tries to communicate his or her wants or desires through these single words. Children try to express what is on their mind. Children all over the world go through the same stages and start talking at roughly the same age of language-development. The progress the children make is so rapid that both the parents and researchers have noted that it is hard to keep a comprehensive and systematic record of it and it is impossible to say of any child exactly when he/she has started to talk.

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