

The Interlanguage of Indonesian Young Learner of English: A Case Study on an Indonesian Bilingual School Kindergarten Student's English Speaking Acquisition

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Abstract

The main research question in this study is a descriptive one: How does a bilingual student negotiate meanings in a casual conversation? The object of this study is an Indonesian kindergarten student of bilingual school -- *Mondial Education*. The student learns three hours a day at school with English as a medium of instruction. To reach the goal, the student's expressions were recorded and transcribed based on turns. The transcription was then analyzed and interpreted. The findings suggest that the investigated learner's utterances are not identical to the corresponding utterances which would have been produced by a native speaker of the target language had attempted to express the same meanings as the learner. The learner's language has its own characteristic that is, the learner's form of target language norm which is not random or toward the learner's native language, but toward the interlanguage norm of the language learner's norm. Some areas of knowledge of language functions are likely acquired by the learner in spite of a number of errors.

Introduction

Amid the growing concern on poor quality education nationwide including the poor English proficiency of the people, there has been a quite interesting phenomenon in Indonesia lately where parents send their children to school earlier than ever before. Parents also tend to involve in eliciting their children's acquisition in English speaking. This study aims at describing and explaining the parents' involvement in this issue.

English was introduced as a foreign language in Indonesia only when public school students had started their secondary school (about the age of thirteen). The main goal of English teaching/learning in the classroom had been to develop the reading ability to prepare the learners to read English references when they enter university or other tertiary education. The other skills of listening, speaking and writing were also taught, but they were not considered to be the skills which learners should aim at. English grammar was a major subject that learners had to master if they wanted to be able to comprehend English written text; and in final examinations, learners were required to answer comprehension questions and to solve grammatical problems (Agustien, 1997: 1-2).

Such a paradigm had not shifted until the year of 2004 when Competency-based Curriculum was introduced. This curriculum is aimed at developing the students' competence to understand and to produce various texts in different contexts both in spoken and written form (Derewianka, 1995). A number of text types (genre) have been introduced in order to provide students with the competence for life-skills (Anderson, 2003). In addition, English is introduced to students earlier, i.e. at the fourth grade of elementary schools.

The question is whether ten years old is the best time for children to start learning a foreign language? In general, according to Moon (2000: 10), young children tend to be more enthusiastic and willing to talk in class than older children. She noted, as children reach puberty, they get more embarrassed about talking in front of others. She added, peer approval becomes very important and they are very concerned not to make a fool of themselves publicly.

The implication of the status of English in Indonesia as a foreign language is that English is taught as a foreign language subject in schools. English is neither the official language used in Indonesia offices nor the medium of instruction at school (Kickpatrick, 2010). It is reasonable that the learners receive 'classroom English' as the main input instead of English they need in order to carry out their daily activities (Feez, 2002).

In line with the critical period hypothesis cited by Ellis (2006:67) it is believed that young age learners can acquire language faster than the older ones. The hypothesis suggests that there is a period during which language acquisition is easy and complete (i.e. native-speaker ability is achieved) and beyond which it is difficult and typically incomplete. He said that people who lost their linguistic capabilities, for example as a result of an accident, were able to regain them totally before puberty (about the age of twelve).

The main research question in this study is a descriptive one: How does a bilingual student negotiate meanings in a casual conversation?

Research Method

The study approach used in this research is a case study. Following this approach, it is decided to record the learner's interlanguage to collect the data. This study is not aimed at finding out a definitive conclusion but is intended to discover specific issues to provide some insights into similar future studies. In an attempt to

substantiate the descriptive nature of the case, the data was gathered by directly observing the learner's interlanguage.

The object of this study is an Indonesian kindergarten student of bilingual school -- *Mondial Education*. The student learns three hours a day at school with English as a medium of instruction. To reach the goal, the student's expressions were recorded and transcribed based on turns. The transcription was then analyzed and interpreted.

Findings and Discussion

This study is interested in learning perspective, meaning that it aims at describing the process attempted learning of a second language. In order to describe the process this study needs data in the form of 'behavioral events' or 'observable data to which we can relate theoretical predictions' such as utterances which are produced when the learner attempts to say sentences of the target language.

The research findings suggest that the investigated learner's utterances are not identical to the corresponding utterances which would have been produced by a native speaker of the target language had attempted to express the same meanings as the learner. The learner's language has its own characteristic Selinker (1972) called 'backsliding', that is, the learner's form of target language norm which is not random or toward the learner's native language, but toward the interlanguage norm of the language learner's norm. The following examples show what it means.

Examples:

Date of birth: July 26, 2008)

(Three years old)

Teacher: Good morning, Aza

Aza : Good mornin

Teacher: How are you?

Aza : I'm fine, thank you.

(Febr 23, 2013)

(Four years and 8 months)

Aza : Denpa (Grandpa), Can you buy me honey?

Grandpa: Honey? Is it something to drink?

Aza : Honey is not to drink, Denpa. Honey is to lick. Like baby.

Grandpa: Okay. It's sweet, isn't it?

Aza : Yes. Honey can make you strong.

Grandpa: Bees produce honey, don't they?

Aza : Yes. Bees and flowers.

(Febr 24, 2013)

Aza : Denpa. I want to ride bicycle. (Please, accompany me)

Grandpa: Mommy. (You can ask Mommy to accompany you)

Aza : Mami don't want to ride bicycle. (Mommy doesn't want to accompany my riding on bicycle).

(Febr 24, 2013, few hours later)

Aza : Den, where have you been? Why you don't ride bicycle with me?

Grandpa: Because I am tired and sleepy.

Aza : You have take a nap.

Grandpa: I tidy up everything, first. I had to take a bath, too. Why were you in a hurry to go?

Aza : Because I have to ride bicycle before already night.

Grandpa: Mommy joined you riding on bicycle, didn't she?

Aza : Yes. But Mommy ride motorcycle.

Grandpa: You wanted Mommy ride bicycle, too?

Aza : Yes. I have to ride faster. I am tired.

(Febr 24, 2013. Few hours later)

Aza : Denpa, why your tummy is big?

Grandpa: Because I eat too much.

Aza : It's like Ballon Denpa.
Grandpa: Baloon Denpa?
Aza : Yes, because your tummy is round.

(Monday, February 25, 2013) (It's about to leave for school)

Aza : Look, Denpa. I show something. (Showing her imaginative construction of blocks)
Grandpa: Wow. What is it?
Aza : It's a machine.
Grandpa: A machine?
Aza : Yes. Machine and explorer.
It is not just a machine. It's a special machine.
Grandpa: Wonderful idea, Aza.
Aza : How to make it, I show you, Denpa.

Monday, Febr 25, 2013. (On the way to school a neighboring house was on fire)

Grandpa: Look! What's happening?
Mommy: It's fire!
Aza : Oh!?
Grandpa: I think we need a fire fighter. You can make a fire fighter with your blocks,
Aza.
Aza : I don't know how to make fire fighter.
Grandpa: You can make a try. I'll show you how.
Aza : Okay, Denpa.

(Monday, Febr 25, 2013. On the way home from school)

Grandpa: Hi, Aza.
Aza : Hi, Denpa.
Grandpa: How's your school day?
Aza : Great!
Grandpa: What did you play?
Aza : I play water
Aza : You are naughty Mommy.
Mommy: No, I'm not naughty.
Aza : You're so naughty. You're not listen to me.
Grandpa: You said Mommy is naughty. Why?
Aza : She her put lipstick on face.
Mommy: Who's absent today?
Aza : Rosa
Mommy: Why?
Aza : I don't know.

(Tuesday. Febr 26, 2013. On the way to go to a ballet class)

Aza : Den, do you have money to buy something?
Grandpa: Yes. Don't worry.
Aza : I have (ballet) performance at Java Mall. I need costume. Can you buy me costume?
Grandpa : Okay.
Aza : Thank you, Denpa.

(Wednesday. Febr 27, 2013. In preparation to school)

Aza : I have pancake today
Grandpa: You mean pancake for your meal time at school?
Aza : Yes. Cause I am boring with mie all the time.
Grandpa: You mean noodle?
Aza : Yes. But I don't have sandwich?
Grandpa: Sandwich?
Aza : Yes. Pancake and sandwich.

Grandpa: It's okay. Who makes it?
Aza : Mommy, of course.

(Thursday, Febr 28, 2012. On the way to school)

Aza : Denpa. What is Tante Tefi?
Grandpa: Pardon?
Aza : What is Tante Tefi, the English?
Grandpa: Aunt Tefi
Aza : Auntie?
Grandpa: Right.

(Friday, March 1, 213. In the living room)

Aza : Tomorrow I want to "Toko Ada". Do you join me?
Grandpa: I'm afraid I cannot.
Aza : Why?
Grandpa: Because I'm working tomorrow. What do you want to buy?
Aza : I cannot tell you.
Grandpa: Why?
Aza : Because I want to give you surprise.
Grandpa: You should know what to buy and then you go.
Aza : I want to buy a hair-clip.

(Saturday, March 2, 2013. In the living room)

Aza : Denpa, Can you play with me?
Grandpa: Ok. What is it?
Aza : Android. I show you how to play the game. Now you do it by yourself.
Grandpa : I'll make a try.
Aza : Oh, dear. You can do it.

(Sunday, March 3, 2013. In the bedroom)

Grandpa: Hi, Aza. What are you doing?
Aza : I'm not done my project. Can you help me?
Grandpa: Project? What is it?
Aza : I make shapes. Can you make holes?
Grandpa: Ok
Aza : Make something with this string.
Grandpa: Ok
Aza : What are you making, Denpa?
Grandpa: A necklace and a gold medal.
Aza : Wow. Beautiful. I like it.
Mommy, I have necklace!
Mommy: Wow.

(Sunday, March 4, 2013. At home)

Aza : Let' make a cake.
Mommy: Okay.
Aza : Mommy, I need sugar. Can you gave me sugar?
Mommy: I have no sugar.
Aza : Just pretend, Mommy.
Grandpa: I have some sugar. Here it is.
Aza : Thank you, Dendpa. Now I need butter.
Grandpa: Here it is.
Aza : Thank you, Denpa. I need...
Grandpa: Eggs?
Aza : Yes, Denpa. Eggs.
Grandpa: Here it is.
Aza : Thank you.

(Tuesday, March 5, 2013)

Aza : Denpa. What day is today?

Grandpa: It's Tuesday.

Aza : You write here (gave a marker and pointed to the white-board)

Grandpa: Okay (while writing TUESDAY on the white-board)

Aza : Good. Date?

Grandpa: Fifth ... of March.

Aza : No. Five dot three dot two thousand thirteen (while writing "5.3.2013" on the white board)

(Wednesday, March 6, 2013.)

Aza : I need to give surprise to Mommy.

Grandpa: What would you like to make?

Aza : I want to make pancake.

Grandpa: Great idea.

Aza : Yap. But I don't know how to make it.

Grandpa: I can help you.

Aza : Yes, Grandpa. We can work together as a team!

(Thursday March 7, 2013. On the way home from school)

Aza : Mommy, tomorrow is a Pet Day.

Mommy: Really? So what?

Aza : Can you buy me pet? I need to bring pet to school tomorrow.

Grandpa: You can borrow Grandpa's bird.

Aza : Thank you, Denpa.

(Friday, March 8, 2013. On the way to school)

Aza : I like this toast. It's yummy.

Mommy: That is a butter toast.

Aza : But it's salty. You put too much salt, Mommy.

Mommy: It's not salt. It's butter.

(Tuesday, March 12, 2013)

Aza : Te Tefi is forgot his medicine.

Grandpa: I think so.

Azs : Did you wet, Den?

Grandpa: Yeap.

Aza : I am not.

Aza : Can I eat one more, Mom?

Grandpa: What do you want to eat?

Aza : Tempura.

: How about this?

(Wednesday, March 13, 2013)

Aza: I check your heart, Mommy

Mommy: Please

Aza : Your blood pressure is good. Now I check your eyes

(Thursday, March 14, 2013)

Aza : I wonder you could draw pets

Mommy: Let me try

Aza : What did you draw?

Mommy: I'm drawing kitty

(Friday, 15, 2013)

Aza : Guess what Mommy. It's green, yellow, red and pink and many cars

Mommy : Traffic light
Aza : Right
Mommy : But it's without pink. It's just green, red and yellow.

The examples above show that the child learned how to say hello to somebody or welcome them and the act of making one person known to another, in which they tell each the other's name and to recognize somebody or something and be able to say who or what they are has been displayed by the child. Additionally, to say that you are willing to do something for somebody or give something to somebody has also been acquired by the child.

Apart from accepting an offer the child could also decline the invitation. Expressing and acknowledging gratitude is one of the aspects of knowledge of language functions in term of interpersonal exchange that the child also acquired.

Making engagements is one of the knowledge of language functions, particularly of its interpersonal exchange. In a learning experience where the child is supposed to play with blocks, utterances dealing with complementing and congratulating could be heard.

In reacting to the interlocutor's speech, the child made utterances as it is found in the example below. The child here is likely involved in exchanging information and goods. Showing attention and interest are two important aspects of knowledge of language functions especially for its interpersonal exchange. The child realized these two aspects in simple expression but understandable.

Showing surprise is not that easy to do for children. However, the child here made every effort to realize it despite limited vocabulary she has acquired. Showing empathy is not less crucial than that of showing surprise. However, the child succeeded to realize it. The example below shows how the child makes it happen. The child here was likely involved in exchanging services and information.

It is argued that children's desire to communicate is very powerful and this carries over into foreign language learning. If they are engaged in an interesting activity, they will happily as it is shown in the example below. The child here seemed to be capable of exchanging information and services.

Sadness because something has not happened or been as good, successful, etc. as the children here expected or hoped had been shown in a learning experience which involves a mother to appreciate one's work. Such disappointment could also take place when the activity required them to move back. The disappointment has been shown in the example below.

Giving people information about something that you have heard, seen and done have also attracted the child here to make it. It includes saying what somebody or something is like and to tell a story. The example below shows how the child report, describe and narrate something. Having or keeping an image in your memory of an event, a person, a place from the past has also been the need of the child here to make it.

Telling somebody about something in a way that makes it easy to understand and talking about something with other people, especially in order to decide something have been the need of the child here. The child here was involved in exchanging information, goods and services.

We should not underestimate children's ability of expressing their feelings or thoughts about something or somebody, rather than a fact and the way that they think and feel about somebody or something; or the way that they behave towards somebody or something that shows how they think and feel. The example below shows how the child here makes it happen. The child was involved in exchanging information.

To have the same opinion as somebody or to say that you that you have the same opinion have been the urgent need of the child here apart from her different opinion about it. They child here expressed it in such a way as it is shown in example below. The child here was involved in exchanging information.

To think that somebody or something is good, acceptable or suitable needs to be realized by the child in an expression. The child also needs to think that somebody or something is not good or suitable, to not approve of as it is shown in example below. The child here was involved in exchanging information and services.

The child is also eager to show the good feeling that she has when she has achieved something or when something that she wanted to happen do happen. In addition to such intention the child wanted to express a feeling that she is not pleased and satisfied.

The child also experienced the feeling of being slightly angry that she needs to express. Additionally, putting forward an idea or a plan for other people to think about has been acquired by the child in spite of simple expressions they make.

The action for asking for something formally and politely has also been demonstrated by the child in a learning experience. To tell somebody to do something especially in a formal or official way is not an exception for the child to express.

To say that you are annoyed, unhappy or not satisfied about somebody or something proves to be the necessity of the child in her communication. To think or to say that somebody or something is responsible to something bad or to say that somebody has done something wrong or is guilty of something is not that simple to realize. However, the child here has taken a risk to realize. To feel sorry about something you have done or about something that you have not been able to do is certainly not that simple. The child here, however, succeeded in realizing it.

The child here seems to have acquired how to say that she is sorry for doing something wrong or causing a problem despite her limitation in vocabulary. Expressing a desire of a feeling that you want to do something or have something and expressing a belief that something you want will happen as well as expressing a strong wish to have or do something requires high nature of imagination. The child has taken the risks of realizing it, too.

The child also managed to expressing something that she intend to do or achieve and expressing something that she hopes to achieve as well as expressing what she intends or plan to do. Additionally, the skill to tell somebody that they will definitely do or not do something or that something will definitely happen has been demonstrated by the child.

To say that something will happen in the future and to form an opinion about something without knowing all the details or facts needs risk taking that the child find it relax to make it happen. In addition, the child also managed to discussing the fact that something might exist or happen, but is not certain to and discussing the ability or qualities necessary to do something.

Conclusion and Implication

The data of this study show that the dialogues between the child, her mother and her grandfather are inherently interactive in the sense that they typically do not involve simply one move from one speaker. It is noted that after one speaker has initiated an exchange, another speaker is very likely responding. The commodity exchanged could be either information or goods and services. The roles associated with the exchange relations are either giving or demanding. The participants in the interactive are the child, her mother and her grandfather. The social role of the mother and the grandfather gives access to the full range of initiating speech functions when interacting with child, while the social role of the child places constraints on both the frequency and types of initiations that can be made to the parents and to the child.

In spite of the fact that the child has been able to perform the speech functions, the language realization has not met a sophisticated pragmatic level of politeness. In using language to ask for information, apologize, persuade and inform, for example, the children have not learned to use the correct words and sentence forms to communicate a range of meanings in her interaction with adults. Apart from the shortcomings in expressing these intentions, the child has not properly interpreted other people's messages. To some extent, however, the child has gone beyond just acquiring grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. The introduction of language chunks is likely the reason why the child demonstrated the ability to use language effectively to fulfill the functions and the goals.

Since this study is pedagogical motivated, the major concern has been to find out what sorts of expressions the learner produced which have direct relevance to the teaching of speaking in English. It is suggested that the knowledge of language functions should be the focus of the learning process in eliciting the young learners' utterances. In Indonesian context, the learners' involvement in the effort should begin as early as two years old.

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