

Acquisition of language of a child brought up in an Assamese language environment

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Abstract :

A child does not born with the knowledge of language. He / she learns the skill gradually with the age getting influence by the surrounding language environment. Mainly through language acquisition a child lerans to speak language. A child acquires the knowledge of language from the environment in which he / she lives. This process of child language acquisition occurs through various stages . The whole process goes through various stages – from an un-understandable word (cooeing) to establishing communication by forming a sentence. A child's language acquisition largely depends upon his/her physical development and the surrounding environment. The language , which a child learns first , is called 'first language' and a child's 'first language' is his/her mother tongue.

Key words: Child, Sound, Word, Sentence, Language, Acquisition .

1. Introduction:

language acquisition is the process by which a child learns one or more languages. A review of the various stages of development of a human child from birth shows that the child attempts to communicate with human society from the stage of birth. It is through such circumstances that language acquisition begins. Child's language acquisition is a spontaneous process. It is a natural instinct of children. Children's language acquisition is considered to be primarily their first language. The first language acquisition of the child is the acquisition of his mother tongue. From births to 18 months the baby pronounces calls, sounds, and from the age of 18 months, he can understand and speak his mother tongue. Mother tongue is the language in which the child grows up in the environment were the child is familiar to the mother tongue. The child who grows up in an Assamese family naturally speaks Assamese as his mother tongue . But if an Assamese couple lives in Delhi for work, their children's mother tongue will be Hindi, which means the child will acquire Hindi first. If a Mising women marries an Assamese or any other man belongs to other ethnic group, the language of her child will also depend on the linguistic environment in which the child is raised. If both Mising and Assamese language are equally spoken in the home than the language to which the child is most attached will be his first language or mother tongue. Sometimes, even if a child is raised abroad, In that case, the influence of his /her parents is certain that the language of his/her own country or state is his/her mother tongue. Mothers play a significant role in children's language acquisition. Since the child lives mostly with the mother, the child's language acquisition may also vary depending on whether the mother is a house wife or working women.

'A child's language acquisition process is said to begin after the birth, but in reality it is only from the age of 18 months that he acquires his mother tongue'. A child's mind and brain are closely interconnected in his language acquisition. Although it is said that children acquire language by imitation, children often use many words, rules of language on their own. In this regard, Nowam Samski says , "Every child has an innate ability to acquire language. Although children acquire language from adults but they do not imitate completely blindly."

2. Purpose of the study:

- 1 . To give an overview of what the children's language acquisition is a how does a child acquire language.
- 2 . To analyze the stages of language acquisition of children.
- 3 . To consider the components of children's language acquisition.
- 4 . To study the process of children's language acquisition.

3. Importance of the study:

The study of children's language acquisition is of immense importance. Language acquisition is natural human instinct. It is very relevant today to discuss all aspects of how a child acquires language, from what age a child can speak, what is the child's mother tongue, what factors work in language acquisition and the processes working behind it.

4. Scope of the study:

The paper 'Acquisition of language of a child brought up in an Assamese language environment mainly studies children between 3 and 4 years of age . To prepare the paper, we have collected data from three children from Assamese speaking families aged 12 months, 18 months and 36 months respectively.



5. Methodology:

We have mainly used to methods to prepare the paper entitled 'Acquisition of language of a child brought up in an Assamese language environment.' –

A . Survey method

B . Analytical method

6. Literary review:

There is a limited work done in the field of child language acquisition in Assamese. However a few linguists have worked regarding this topic .

Dr. Phanindra Narayan Dutta Baruah published 'Prayog Bhasa Vigyanar Ruprekha' in 2006 and described about the acquisition of mother tongue in this book. In Nahendra Padun's edited book 'Bhashar Tattva Katha', Basanti Devi wrote an article called 'Manobhashavigyan Eti Samu Parichay' talked about child language acquisition. Later, Jatindra Nath Goswami, in the year 2008, published a book named 'Matribhasha Sikshan'. In 2021 Nipom Kalita and Bhrittuttom Bora jointly edited a book named 'Bhashavigyan and Asomiya Bhasha Sankalan' where Brojen Baishya wrote an article called 'Shishur Bhasha Ahoran'.

7. Analysis of the study :

Children's language acquisition stage:

A child is not born with the ability to acquire language . Children go through different stages to acquire language. The child's biological maturity and environment are also key components of the child's language acquisition stage. During language acquisition, children go through six main stages. Below there is a brief description of how children acquire language at those stages with examples-

A) Pre-talking/ Cooing (0-6 months) :

According to Bolinger, at this pre-talking or cooing stage, children respond to human sounds and the environment by making some pronunciations such as vowels. After birth , the baby feels strange in the world and starts crying and slowly after two or three months , the baby adapts to the environment and starts calling . As per Bolinger, babies at exactly four months of age, pronounce the vowels . According to the information received , for example – a,e,i,o,u etc. Such vowel-like pronunciations also change to consonant – like pronunciation within four to six months. Such as – kuu, kaa, goo, kiu. This stage is also called the cooing stage because it is like cooing. The sounds pronounced at this level have no meaning. And these are the initial stages of development of voice organs for children to acquire language.

B) Babbling phase (6-8 months) :

From six to eight months of age , babies begin to pronounce consonants . At this stage , the child is able to pronounce vowels and consonant clearly . For example – ma-ma-ma , ba-ba-ba , ka-ka , ta-ta , da-da , na-na-na etc. This is how the child expresses feelings or emotions at this stage by pronouncing letters . Children at this stage tend to pronounce more bilabial consonants like- ma-ba-pa.

C) A sound phase (1year- 1.5 year) :

After about one year of age or between one and a half years of age , a child begins to pronounce different word easily. At this stage the child pronounces those words which are commonly known words that can be easily pronounced . It is seen that at this stage the children pronounce relatively relational noun words . For example – mama, baba, dada, papa, nina, kaka, ma etc. At this stage children's senses are not mature enough to pronounce some words well and they pronounce some words in their own way to describe different situations. For example –

- 1 . In the context of 'going for a walk' – fu fu
- 2 . In the context of ' giving or asking' - de de
- 3 . To indicate 'fish' – ji ji
- 4 . To indicate 'rice' – mum
- 5 . To indicate 'cat' – mew mew
- 6 . To indicate 'dog' – bhau bhau
- 7 . In the negative context – na na
- 8 . Nisa (relational word) – nina
- 9 . To indicate 'aunt' – khu / khu khu
- 10 . To indicate aunt(father's sister) – pee
- 11 . To indicate uncle (father's elder brother) – bo'
- 12 . To mean 'papa' – pa

It is seen that children begin to pronounce many relational words in letters .Many familiar words are pronounced at this stage .

D) Two sounds stage :

A child is usually able to put two words together to make a sentence between one and a half and two years of age . During this time , children acquire many new words . It is important to note that children need time to understand the meaning of the words acquired from his/her environment , yet children acquire some of the most important words commonly use



in a short time and start pronouncing the sentences. According to Frnkyen, A child at this stage actually forms two word sentences and relates to the symantic aspect of the word. They pronounce two word sentences, especially by adding relation noun words to verb words. For example –

Maa jam (I will go to my mother)

Pa dim (I wii give it to my father)

Ba kha (sister, eat it) etc.

Again, it seen that they pronounce two word sentences by adding verb related words to different words.

For example – mam kham (I will eat rice)

Jiji kham (I will eat fish)

Bibi de (give me biscuit)

Gigi jam (I will go in the car)

Fufu jam (I will go for a walk)

Mom de (give me meat) etc.

Again it is seen that they pronounce the same words twice simultaneously. For example –

Dai-dai (paternal uncle/ father's younger brother)

Fufu- fufu (I am going for a walk)

Mom -mom (to express eating meat or having the urge to eat meat)

Nai-nai (in the negative context)

Pit-pit (in the context of vehicles like-car)

Aah-aah (in the context of calling someone or something)

In this way children pronounce two words at this stage in different contexts.

E) Phase of sentence use :

Between ages of about two and a half and three years, children are able to acquires various words For example – nouns, adjectives, and verbs. They are able to relate these to their pronunciation as well as their meaning.

At this stage, children are able to form sentencers. They combines verbs with different nouns and adjectives.

In this case, child's speech is beyond the fixed rules of grammar. The sentences uttered by children are very simple. For example –

Mum kham (Mom, I want to eat rice)

Maa jiji kham (Mom I want to eat fish)

Maa fufu jam (Mom I am going for a walk)

Maa pit pit jam (Mom we will go in the car)

Ba aah (come, sister)

Mok de (give it to me)

Mai jojo karim (I want to take a bath)

Mom kham (I want to eat rice with meat)

Papa jam (I want to go to papa) .

F) Stage of acquiring practical language skills :

According to Bolinger, at this stage, from about the age of three, children acquire more words and with the apropiate meaning in the apropiate context. At this stage, the child gradually acquires languages by making sense of what he hears with his ears and what he sees with his eyes. At this stage, the child learns most of the structures of the relevant languages. In addition, the child's physical ly matured and also the speech organ matures during this period. This allows an ordinary child to pronounce all the usual words, and to form sentences. For example during this time the child can say his identity, the names of his parents, the name of his village and various necessary sentences. In short, children are able to communicate with people. This is the time when many children now a days go to nursery schools, Kindergartens, Montessory play schools, as a result of which makes language acquisition of children is faster and easier.

For example –

Mor nam Gungun (My name is Gungun)

Maa nam dipi (mothers name is Dimpi)

Maa mok dia

Paa kaloi gol

Dai dai tuma bhal ne ?

In addition, at this stage children can acquire various definite suffixes to make question sentences.

Heito ki ? (what's that ?)

Eito kar ? (where is this ?)

Again at this stage poems written in various rhymes can also be found. It is seen that children imitate adults when acquiring language and make some connection of its own.

Na + khai = Nakhai, use in the negative context. And the child says it himself when he hears the elder say it and uses 'Na' when others say positive words in the negative. For example – Na + pare = Napare. But actually 'Noware' is the right word. Again the words 'goisu', 'aasu', are heard and 'Jam' are used based on 'jaisu', 'jai' etc.

At this stage, children always form sentences with new words, this stage is the fastest stage of word acquisition.

Components of children's language acquisition :

The process of children's language acquisition is mainly depend on two components , those are – 1) Physical component and 2) Environmental component. Both the psycho-physical condition and the environment play a role in a child language acquisition. These two elements are complementary. Healthy physical and mental development helps children to acquire language from their environment . The human body plays a special role in child language acquisition . The biological growth of the body makes the children suitable for language acquisition. Language is created by the harmony of mind and body . The main parts of the human body that acquire language in children are the organs such as the lips, teeth, tongue, root of the teeth, root of the tongue, palate, alvolic, vocal cords, nasal cavity, mouth cavity. They pronounce sounds through these sense of speech/speech organ.

The lungs are another organ that plays a special role in the pronunciation of sounds. The role of the human brain in language acquisition is undeniable . The brain makes sense of a sound after it reaches the sense of hearing and also the reaction depends on the brain. The brain is divided into two parts -the cerebrum and the hindbrain. There are two parts of the cerebrum , the right and left , the left part of which produces the pronunciation and sense of human language. Injury to this area of the brain can impair language acquisition in children/human beings. Another special factor in children's language acquisition is the environment . The child interacts with the different people in his home , relatives and surrounding environment . And the child puts what he hears into practice later. Children can easily learn the language of the environment in which they grow up. Children also learn language by listening to what their parents are saying . If a child is born in an Assamese family and lives in Delhi then that Assamese child can easily speak or acquire Hindi language instead of Assamese . This is because most of the people around the environment in which the child is raised are Hindi speakers . Similarly if an Indian Hindu or Assamese child is brought up in a place like – America , England his easily acquired language will be English . In other words , a child's first language is called his mother tongue and this mother tongue is not just the language of mouth or native language , the environment in which the child grows up, the tongue he uses most is his mother tongue and that language is acquired first , In addition to these two components , another component of children's language acquisition is strong motivation. Childhood is the golden time of language acquisition . In childhood , the child's mind and brain are curious to know, to see what he doesn't see , to understand what he does not understand. Children acquire language at different times to meet their needs. In addition they can make meaningful connections with the visual experience of objects as well as words by seeing the various objects they see in the shop. Another component of a child's language acquisition is the rapid movement of the five sense . The child's ears, eyes, lips, tongue, skin are constantly active and the brain is sharp. As a result , they can acquire language easily . In addition , children have insufficient time during childhood. There is no need to acquire these sounds at this time, children can acquire language at any time during childhood.

Children's language acquisition process :

Children language acquisition is an innate instinct of children. Children acquire language from birth. It is an innate quality of children . When we talk about the process of children's language acquisition , we can mainly refer hearing/listening, selection and imitation .

Hearing and selection :

The language that children hear from adults from an early age is complex in everywhere. However the language addressed to children is somewhat simpler. Even though there is very little talk addressed to children . Children take what they need from that complex language they hear from adults by their own selection . It is seen that , in that case of sounds , they used different sounds instead of actual sounds, and also some sounds are left out. This is true of the 'r' sound – rang-ang , rol-lol, aro-ao etc.

The same goes for words and sentences . They select and uses the necessary parts of the words and sentences heard by the adults at first, it is seen that children can acquire relational words easily. For example – ma, pa (papa), ba (elder sister) ,dai-dai (uncle) , pee(aunt/younger sister of father) etc.

In the case of sentences , children pronounce one word sentences easily such as - 'aah', 'kham', 'de' , 'jaa', etc. Two words sentences such as -

Maa dia

Baa jai

Mai kham etc

In this way, children select and apply the necessary words and phrases from the words or phrases they constantly hear from adults.

Process of imitation :

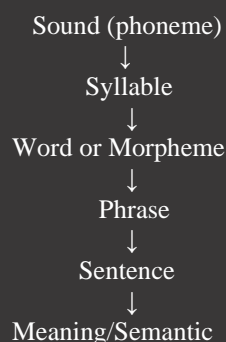
Imitation plays a significant role in children's language acquisition . This imitation is not taught to the child by the adult , Adult does not encourage him/her to imitate it, what the child imitates is not an imitation of a specific sound, word or sentences , it is an imitation of a pattern word or sentence . For example- 'mai t.v dekhim' , here 'dekhim' is used in the

sense of watching. In other words the child is saying ‘mai T.V dekhim’(I will watch, T.V) by engaging in ‘mai pahim’(I will read), ‘mai nasim’(I will dance). So the phrase – ‘mai naparu’(I can’t) is also the result of imitation. It means ‘mai nowaru’(I can’t) , but when the child uses ‘ na+karo >nakaro’, likewise the child uses ‘na+paro > naparo’. Exactly in this way the child uses the word ‘jaisu’ instead of ‘goisu’ and ‘jaisil’ instead of ‘goisil’ on the structural basis of the word like ‘jam’, ‘jabo’ (to go) etc. Based on the structure of the word , this process is called the generalization process. Which is closely related to imitation .

From a linguistic point of view , children acquire language through certain processes. First, sound development . Children pronounce vowel sounds at a very early stage. For example – u,a,i,o etc. Then the child pronounces the bilabial sounds easily such as - ma, ba, papa , pi etc. Later , they can pronounce all the sounds gradually . Sometimes there are some problems with pronunciation of the ‘ra’(r) sound. For example - ranga> anga, rod> od etc. Secondly , they pronounce syllables such as –‘ aah, maa, mum, de’ etc. They start pronouncing various relational words like – maa,-papa,-ba,-dada, -khu, -pee, -ba (mom, dad,sister, aunty,uncle) etc. In addition, various verbs such as -kham,-dim,-jam(eat,give,go) etc. are acquired . They pronounce phrases or groups of words after words , such as – moi jam(I will go), ba dim (I will give it to elder sister), fufu jam(I will go for a walk) etc. They learn to form sentences along with words . They also acquire some grammatical rule.

Many sentences start with letter ‘Ka’ which signifies an interrogative sentence. Likewise words ‘hoy’, ‘nohoy’ (yes/no) are used in the pronunciation of interrogative sentences. For example – what is that? (heitu ki) what is this?(eitu ki) why?(kio) is it okay with you?(tumar bhal) whose ball is this? (boll tu kar)etc. Again using the grammatical rule or the pre-mentioned generalization process, they make some rule by themselves, for example: the term ‘por’ is matched with ‘porhisilu’... ‘ja’ becomes ‘jaisilu’, ‘koru’ is corroborated with ‘nokoru’ and then used as ‘no’, ‘naparu’. In this way the child acquires language through various processes. The correction done by the parents is also a process of child language acquisition. Like “eitu maas nohoy, mankho haa” is the correction of “eitu jiji nohoy, mom” etc.

The child language acquisition also includes the process of understanding the meaning. The child understands in which context a word or a sentence is used. The process of acquiring the child language through this process of understanding can be showed as the following:



Information gathered :

I have collected data from three children (of different ages) for this paper. The first child was one year old, the second one was eighteen months old and the third one was thirtysix month old . Since these three children are from Assamese speaking background , the above paper has been analyzed with priority given to the Assamese language only. I have also spoken to the mothers of the children’s about the language of their children. Below is the information gathered from my data collection regarding the stage of child’s language acquisition and how did the child do it.

	Language pronunciation/ Acquisition model	Stages of language acquisition	Context/Meaning
First child (12 months ol)	U,a,o	cooeing	vowels
	Maa, ba, papa	babbling	Bilabial sound, relational words
	Mama , dada , papa , nina, jiji, momo	One word phase	Relational words, fish-meat
	Ma mum, papa jam , ba jam ,fu fu	Two words phase	going to parents (mom,papa,ba) , go for a walk
	Ma mum kham , ma fufu jam	Phases of sentence use	Mom, I want to eat rice Mom , I want to go for a walk
	Mor nam Gungun Maa nam dipee Dai dai toma bhal ne ?	Phase of acquiring practical language skills	My name is Gungun My mom’s name is Dimpi How are you uncle ?

	Language pronunciation/ acquisition model	Stages of language acquisition	Context/meaning
Second child (18 months old)	E,ee,ie,a,o,uu	cooeing	vowels
	Baba,ma,pa,bo,dada	babbling	Pronunciation of Bilabial and consonant sounds
	Dada, keka, pi, mama, baba, ani(nani), mimi,bhau bhau,momo	One word phase	Relational word and Cat, dog, meat
	Mum kham ,jiji kham ,ba jam , gigi jam	Two words phase	I want to eat rice-fish I want to go to elder sister and I want to ride on a car
	Ma jiji kham Moi ja ja karim	Phase of sentence use	Mom I want to eat fish I want to have a bath
	Ma pa kot gal Ma mok dia	Phases of practical language skills	Mom , where has dad gone? Mom , give it to me.

	Language pronunciation	Stage of language acquisition	Context/meaning
Third child (36 months old)	u, o,a,aa,oo,ei	cooeing	vowels
	Ma, ba-ba , da-da , ta-ta, ba	babbling	Pronunciation of consonant
	Apa, nina,dada, na-na, de-de	One word phase	Relational word/ Nothung , give
	Pa dim ,bibi de , pit pit , aah aah	Two words phase	I will give it to dad Give biscuit; Motor-car , come come
	Ma fufu jam Ma pit pit jam Mok de Mom mum kham	Sentence use phase	Mom, I want to go for a walk Mom, I want to ride car Give it to me I want to eat rice with meat
	Heito ki ? Maio jam Mai naparo He khai ase	Phases of practical language skills	Interrogative sentence I can't He is eating

8. Conclusion :

Children language acquisition is a systematic process that proceeds in stages. It is seen that children acquire language differently at different stages . The environment plays an important role in child's language acquisition . The linguistic environment in which the child lives affects the child's language acquisition . A child may have two first languages because his parents speak different languages. For example- the daughter of a young man from Disangmukh in Sivasagar can speak Miching and Bodo languages equally because her mother is aBodo-Miching womrn. There is also scope for research on what happens when there are two mother tongue. If a child can not speak for 18 to 30/36 months, various therapies are used to improve it . Since children's language acquisition is also related to the mind and brain , it can also be classified as psycholinguistics and neurolinguistics.

9. Findings :

- Children language acquisition is innate instinct of children.
- Mother tongue acquisition is the first language acquisition of a child.
- The language in which the child is raised is naturally the child's mother tongue.
- From the age of 18 months , children can speak or understand their mother tongue.
- Children acquire language through the six stages of cooeing , babbling , one word phase, two words f) phase, phase of sentence use, and acquisition of practical language skills.
- Children's language acquisition process is mainly dependent on physical and environmental factors.
- Chidren usually acquire language through the process of listening selection and imitation.

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