



Phonological Processing In Garo Children (Aged 2 To 3 Years)

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the phonological processing among two to three-year-old Garo children. The Garo language provides a distinctive linguistic context for comprehending early language acquisition, which is predominantly spoken in the Garo Hills area of the western state of Meghalaya. This study investigates phonological processes and linguistic development by observing and analyzing speech samples from Garo children aged 2 to 3 years. By examining these facets, the study seeks to advance our knowledge of the general patterns of language learning while also offering unique perspectives on the Garo language and cultural setting. The results of this study have implications for educational interventions, theoretical linguistics, and language preservation initiatives for children who speak Garo.

Introduction

Examining phonological acquisition in children provides an essential perspective on the complex language acquisition process in the early years of life. The process by which children learn to generate and recognize the sounds of their mother tongue is known as phonological development. Mastering the phonemes, or unique sound units, that make up the phonological inventory of the language is required.

The Garo language, belonging to the Tibeto-Burman language family, is characterized by its rich oral tradition, complex grammatical structures, and distinct phonological features. Examining the phonological growth of two to three-year-old Garo children provides a chance to investigate how language abilities develop within this particular cultural and linguistic community.

Phonological development in children reaches significant milestones in the early years as they move from making pre-linguistic vocalizations to forming recognized words and sentences. Comprehending these developmental milestones within the framework of the Garo language provides insight into how Garo children learn and work with the phonemes, or unique sound units, that serve as the basis for their linguistic communication.

This research aims to investigate different facets of phonological development in two- to three-year-old Garo children, encompassing phonemic inventory, phonological processes, and lexical development. Through an analysis of these aspects of phonological development, scholar aims to elucidate the processes through which Garo children pick up and hone their language abilities in the crucial early stages of language acquisition.

Moreover, exploring phonological development in Garo children contributes to our understanding of universal patterns of language acquisition and highlights the role of culture and environment in shaping linguistic development. By enhancing our comprehension of human linguistic diversity and the complexities of early language acquisition processes, the research findings can be applied to educational interventions, language revitalization initiatives, and more general theoretical frameworks in linguistics.

Methods

This kind of study is known as qualitative research. The descriptive method is employed in this study, which entails verbally describing the issues raised by the research topic, the theory that was applied, the data analysis, and other related problems. Interviews and observations were utilized to gather the data for this investigation. This study aimed to explain how children learn phonology and to describe how vowel and consonant sounds are acquired.

A child between the ages of two and three served as the subjects of the study. There are eight kids involved in this study who are informants: four boys and four girls. Two boys and two girls are two to two-half years and

the other two boys and two girls are two-half to three years. The process of gathering the data involves listening to how language is used.

Analysis

The phonological processes that are widely observed are:

1. Substitution
2. Reduplication
3. Syllable deletion
4. Assimilation
5. Transposition
6. Glottal deletion
7. Consonant deletion

1. Substitution

The sound is replaced by another sound without reference to neighboring sounds. Children avoid complex sounds by using other sounds until they can pronounce them. It can occur initially, medially, and finally.

For example:

Fronting:

/k/ → /t/ (back sound to front sound)

“kam” (work) → “tam”

/g/ → /d/

“gue” (betelnut) → “due”

Backing:

/t/ → /k/ (front sound to back sound)

“ta·a” (yam) → “ka·a”

/d/ → /g/

“dam” (price) → “gam”

Stopping:

/p/ → /b/ (voiceless sound to voiced sound)

“pul” (flower) → “bul”

/t/ → /d/

“toa” (tasty) → “doa”

2. Reduplication:

When the children start to utter a word, their common syllable is CV. While CVC becomes more frequent than CV. There are many processes used by children to simplify the syllable structure. The first one is reduplication, which has been studied by many phonologists (Hyman, 1975; Ingram, 1976; Crystal, 1994). They define it as a repetition of syllables in a word.

Complete reduplication is used by children before age two, but some words are still used at this age. In addition to the words /baba/ (father), and /mama/ (uncle), children at this age used to say;

/gep-gep/, which refers to /doʔgep/ (duck)

/mi-mi/, which means /mi/ (rice)

/mam-mam/, which refers to /caʔa/ (eat)

3. Syllable Deletion:

Children’s utterances are primarily monosyllabic, but they delete weak syllables when they utter polysyllabic words (Ingram, 1976).

For example:

Initial syllable deletion- /atcu/ (grandfather) → /cu/

/ambi/ (grandmother) → /bi/

Medial syllable deletion- /aiwaci/ (there) → /ai-ci/

/teʔraja/ (watermelon) → /teʔ-ja/

Final syllable deletion- /doʔo/ (bird) → /do/

4. Assimilation:

Assimilation processes occur when an element in the word influences another element and becomes more alike. Assimilation can be progressive or regressive.

Progressive assimilation occurs when a preceding sound influences a sound in a word; that is, a later sound in a word is changed.

Regressive assimilation occurs when a sound is influenced by a later sound so that an earlier sound in the word is changed.

Example: /peru/ (fox) → /pelu/

/Achak/ (dog) → /asak/

5. Transposition

Transposition refers to the process of rearranging the letters or sounds within a word to form a new word or phrase.

For example:

/aranos/ instead of /anaros/ (pineapple)

/tibe/ instead of /bite/ (fruit)

6. Glottal deletion

Glottal deletion refers to the phonological process in which a glottal consonant is deleted or removed from a word or phrase. In other words, a glottal stop (/ʔ/) is omitted, and the surrounding sounds are connected without a pause.

For example:

/masija/ instead of /maʔsija/ (don't know)

/jalik/ instead of /jaʔlik/ (chilli)

/cajok/ instead of /caʔjok/ (Eaten)

7. Consonant deletion:

Consonant deletion is a phonological process where a consonant sound is removed or deleted from a word or phrase.

For example:

Initial consonant deletion: Removing the first consonant sound,

/matcu/ (cow) → /-atcu/ (grandfather)

Medial consonant deletion: Removing a consonant sound within a word,

/modipol/ → /mo-ipol/ (papaya)

Final consonant deletion: Removing the last consonant sound,

/makkre/ → /makk-e/ (monkey)

Results and Discussion

Research Findings

1. Phonological errors: Removing one or two letters of the word, changing the letters of the word into the other letters.
2. Incorrect utterances: Parents always think that the child will understand more if they say the word how the child pronounces it. They do not pronounce something genuinely.
3. Imitation: The child is sensitive to imitating the words in his environment, such as on television or from the people around him/her.
4. Correction: The child will get frustrated if his/her parents do not understand what he/she is discussing.
5. Indicating the question: The child always uses the word "hah?" to indicate the still unclear question and wants to repeat it.
6. Learning by experience: Naming something based on his/her experiences.
7. Laziness: Giving a response or information with a single word to simplify his/her answer.

Discussion

Based on the findings above on the problems of the children in first language acquisition, the researcher formulates some terms, they are: how to ask the questions, how to respond, how to tell his/her desire, how to tell his/her ideas or experiences, how to reject, and how to end the conversation. The problem of children is a typical developmental pattern according to the definition of phonological processing.

Conclusion

This study has lighted the phonological processes of Garo children to simplify their speech. These are substitution, transposition, glottal deletion, and consonant deletion. The results show that substitution occurs frequently, mainly at the age of two, and may continue with a limited set of sounds until age six. Transposition appears in several words at the age of two years six months. Glottal deletion starts with the first attempts of the child to speak. It decreases significantly, and children's speech becomes more accurate and adult-like. Finally, consonant deletions are typically exhibited between the ages of one to four. It is common, especially in informal speech.

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