

THE ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH AS SECOND LANGUAGE BY MIXED-MARRIAGE CHILDREN IN SYDNEY

Yasmin Bahalwan

English Literature, Faculty of Languages and Arts, State University of Surabaya

11020154014.yasmin@gmail.com

Slamet Setiawan

English Department, Faculty of Languages and Arts, State University of Surabaya

slametsetiawan@unesa.ac.id

Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas pemerolehan bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa kedua oleh anak dari pernikahan campuran (Australia – Indonesia) yang tinggal di Sydney. Mereka tumbuh dalam lingkungan keluarga dimana orangtua menggunakan bahasa yang berbeda, Ayah menggunakan bahasa Inggris dan Ibu menggunakan bahasa Indonesia. Analisis pada karya tulis ini menerapkan teori sosiolinguistik dan menggunakan metode kualitatif agar dapat menjabarkan hasil secara jelas dalam bentuk teks. Permasalahan yang diteliti dalam pembelajaran ini adalah (1) proses anak dari keluarga pernikahan campuran dalam memperoleh bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa kedua, (2) faktor internal dan eksternal yang mempengaruhi anak dari keluarga pernikahan campuran dalam mempelajari bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa kedua dan (3) bahasa dominan yang digunakan oleh tiap anak dari keluarga pernikahan campuran. Dari hasil analisis dan pembahasan, peneliti memperoleh jawaban dari rumusan masalah, yaitu (1) dalam proses pemerolehan bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa kedua, anak-anak melewati beberapa tahapan, yaitu : penggunaan bahasa pertama, periode diam (tidak aktif berbicara), mulai menggunakan bahasa kedua dan memproduksi bahasa kedua, (2) dalam proses pemerolehan bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa kedua, anak-anak juga dipengaruhi oleh beberapa faktor yaitu internal (usia, motivasi dan kemampuan berbahasa) dan eksternal (strategi pembelajaran dan lingkungan), (3) saudara yang ditumbuhkan dalam lingkungan yang sama juga memiliki kemungkinan mempunyai bahasa dominan yang berbeda, hal ini tergantung pada tingkat keseringan mereka dalam menggunakan bahasa.

Kata kunci : pemerolehan bahasa kedua, bilingual, pernikahan campuran.

Abstract

This study discusses the acquisition English as second language by children of mixed-marriage (Australian- Indonesian) family who live in Sydney. They grow up in the one parent-one language environment. This study applies sociolinguistic theory in the analysis and uses qualitative method. This is expected to convey the result properly in the form of detail texts. The main issues addressed in this study are (1) the process of children of a mixed-marriage family in acquiring English as second language, (2) the internal and external factors affecting the children of a mixed-marriage family in acquiring English as second language and (3) the dominant language which is employed by each child of a mixed-marriage family. The finding shows that: (1) several stages are experienced by children along the process of acquiring English as second language, namely : employing L1, being silent, starting to use L2, and producing L2, (2) in the process of acquiring English as second language, children were affected by some factors both internal (age, motivation, aptitude) and external (learning strategy and environment), (3) even siblings who grow up in the same environment could have different dominant language depending on the frequency of using the language.

Key words : second language acquisition, bilingual children, mixed-marriage.

INTRODUCTION

All children are born ready to learn language to communicate with the significant people in their lives. Within the first few years of life, virtually all typically developing children master the basics of one language.

Although this is a complex task that requires much effort, it is expected and considered normal. For instance, increasingly, in the Sydney young children are in learning environments where more than one language is used. Internationally, it is estimated that there are as many children who grow up learning two languages as

one. As a proof, the number of children enrolled in preschool whose home language is not English has been steadily increasing.

Throughout the U.S., the academic achievement levels, high school completion rates, and college attendance rates of English-language learners remain markedly below that of their English-speaking peers. There is a growing and convincing body of research that high quality early childhood education can improve the educational achievement of children from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and help to reduce this achievement gap before kindergarten. Therefore, it is important for the early childhood profession to have a clear understanding of how children acquire a second language in order to design high quality learning environments for children who are in the process of acquiring English as their second language.

Second language acquisition is concerned with the study of the way in which an individual becomes able to use one or more language different from his first language. This process can take place in a natural setting or through formal classroom instruction, and, although the degree of proficiency that can be attained is a controversial topic, it can start at childhood or during the adult age (Krashen, 1982)

Bilingual children language acquisition generally refers to the acquisition of two languages or more when language obtained by children from an early age (Myers-Scotton, 2006; 324). In the case of these children, "acquisition" means learning the language spontaneously with little or, even without any real effort. Indeed, the great development of the world seems like insisting people to speak two languages, at least. People have international language, which is English. So people have to master both mother tongue and English. This circumstance is so called bilingualism.

Bilingualism is a condition which is people have capability to speak and understand two languages. As Bloomfield (1993:22) states that bilingualism means an equal ability to communicate in two languages. Being bilingual is something common in society nowadays. The increasing of multicultural society in line with the growing of bilinguals. Elizabeth (2002) states bilingual is a person who uses or is able to use two languages, especially with equal fluency.

In addition, the other factor of bilingual children is migration. Migration to a different country is also typically associated with pressures to acquire a new L2, further decreasing exposure to and opportunities for using the L1. Research increasingly shows that most young children are capable of learning

two languages and that bilingualism confers cognitive, cultural, and economic advantages (Bialystok, 2001; Genesee, 2004; Hakuta & Pease-Alvarez, 1992).

Moreover, it is commonly assumed that preschool-aged children can just pick up a second language without much effort or systematic teaching. However, becoming proficient in a language is a complex and demanding process that takes many years. As with any type of learning, children will vary extremely in the rate at which they learn a first and a second language. The speed of language acquisition is due to factors both within the child and in the child's learning environment. This issue is fascinating topic to be discussed in this study related to the way children acquire second language in second language setting.

This study discussed the process of acquiring English as second language by children of mixed-marriage family in Sydney. The point of the study is examining on the process of acquiring second language of bilingual children who growing up in second language environment as well as finding out factors that influence bilingual children in acquiring second language. Statement of the problem in this study is how the children learn their second language, that is English, in second language country after learn Indonesian as their first language. The research question of this study is how do children of mixed-marriage family learn English as second language. This study is conducted to find out the stage of SLA that is experienced by children of mixed-marriage family.

Two children of mixed-marriage family was chosen as the subject of this study. The mother is Indonesian and the father is Australian. Even though they live in second language setting (Australia) but the mother taught them Indonesian first as their first language. Then they are introduced to English after they school. The first child is a 13 years-old girl and the second is an 8 years-old boy.

There were some theories used in this study. Those are Second Language Acquisition by Rod Ellis, Second Language Acquisition in Early Childhood by Linda M.Espinossa, Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning by Stephen Krashen.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative research, since this study does not use numerical form, but written data that is taken from the observation and interviews of the study. The research uses some procedure to make a qualitative data. It is supported by Richard et al. (1992) who defines that qualitative research is the research that uses procedures to make a qualitative data, such as observations, interviews, or participant observation which is used to get the valid

data about the process of bilingual children who acquire second language in second language country. Because this study is a qualitative study, so it will have an interesting part in meanings, perspectives, and understandings. Beside that an emphasis on process and a concern with the analysis and grounded theory was also taken in this study.

The subjects of observation are two children of mix marriage couple, whose mother is Indonesian and father is Australian. They live in Dee Why, Sydney, Australia. The first subject is Rina (pseudo name), 13 years old and the second is Bian (pseudo name), 8 years old. The father and the mother are employees. After Rina was born, the mother resigned from the company to stay at home and was being a house wife. She had much quality times to take care her child at home. She always communicated with Rina in Indonesian in the early age since she wanted her child to be able to speak Indonesian in order to have good communication with the family in Indonesia when they visit Indonesia. Yet, after she schooled at 4 years old, she started to learn. Every subject in school is delivered in English and her friends always speak English. But this case does not make her Indonesian dwindled. She still maintained her Indonesian, even though sometimes when speaking, she mixed it with English.

Moreover, the mother also treated Brian in the same way as she did to Rina, such as communicated in Indonesian, listened to Indonesian kid song, and watched cartoon which delivered in Indonesian. Yet, he just schooled at 6 years old, it was 2 years later than the time Rina schooled. Thus, his progress of acquiring English was not as good as Rina.

The observer collected the data by chatting via Skype and observing when the subjects visited Indonesia. They visit Indonesia once a year. That is on June, on their winter holiday. They stay in Indonesia on June until July. The location to collect the data is in Sidoarjo, East Java, Indonesia.

FINDING

The finding of the process of acquisition English as L2 provides several stages that have been experienced by the learners. Along the process of acquiring English, the children of mixed-marriage family unconsciously exceed some stages to eventually be able to produce sentence in new language, English. The period of each stage was not the same on each child, see table 1.

Table 1. The range progress of SLA's progress by Bilingual Children

Stage of Acquiring SLA		First Child	Second Child
Learning First Language		0 -4 years old	0-6 years old
Learning Second Language	Employing First Language	4 -4,1 years old	6-6,3 years old
	Being Silent	4,1 -4,3 years old	6,3-6,6 years old
	Starting to Speak	4,3 - 4,5 years old	6,6-7,2 years old
	Producing Language	4,5-13 years old	7,2-8 years old

1) Employing First Language

After having an interview with the mother, it was known that on the early process of acquiring English, the children still employed the first language although nobody noticed it. The following conversation was collected via Skype with the mother on March 8th 2014.

- (01) Interviewer : What do you think of your children ability in comprehending new language in the early process?
- Mother : Indeed, age is the one of crucial factor in learning process of new language. Even though in the early process they did not really good in comprehending English but they seemed slightly faster to comprehend it than me. They also understood their friend's utterances but still gave responses in Indonesian. It is because

they were still children in which their brain still easy to learn new language, that's why they could comprehend English, though just few words, in their early learning process.

Mother : After few days, they realized that their friends spoke other language and did not understand their language at all. They seemed try to listen and listen. They wanted to know what their friends talking about in order to be able to keep in touch with them.

From the conversation above, it is known that children could even comprehend English in their first stage of learning process. The mother believed that age is one of crucial factors that helped the learning process ran well. Both of children could response their friend's utterances when their friends spoke. Even though the response was in Indonesian, but it was still kind of proof that they comprehended their new language, English.

The process of comprehending L2 and speaking L2 did not occur at the same time. The mother also confessed that she intentionally taught children Indonesian as their first language because she did not want to let their children become master only in English after they school. She expected children could comprehend her native language, Indonesian, even though Indonesian did not employ in the daily conversation as frequent as English. Hence, on the first few days of school, children persisted used the home or first language (Indonesian) though their entire friends did not understand what they were talking about. Nevertheless, they seemed like enjoyed telling everything in Indonesian. So they spoke with their friends and teachers used Indonesian and did not need any responses.

2) Being Silent

The following stage is being silent. When they spoke Indonesian and their friends confused about their language, it made them realized that their first language did not work. So, they began entering being silent. It is called being silent because, indeed, they hardly spoke in this stage.

Moreover, in this stage, children listened to the language used by their friends and tried to understand. Children only listened to every single utterance of friends and teachers. The process of acquiring and recording new vocabularies began. The following conversation was collected from the mother via Skype on March 8th 2014.

(02) Interviewer : How could they have a good relationship with their friends if their friends did not understand their language?

In the conversation above, the mother explained that children experienced being silent, in which they just kept silent and listened to their friend's utterances. They tried to acquire more words in this stage. It means that this stage is one step further than the first stage (Employ First Language). In the initial stage, it was declared that children could only comprehend few words and still employed Indonesian when they spoke with their friends, while in this stage they tried to comprehend more in order to create the communicative situation between them (children of mixed-marriage family and their friends).

Furthermore, this stage did not only the moment to learn English word but also to learn the way to pronounce it. They hardly spoke, just listened and endeavored to learn the way their friend's pronounce every single word. The situation of this stage definitely portrayed the learning process. The following dialogue was collected from the mother via Skype on March 10th 2014.

(03) Interviewer : Does it mean that they were not as cheerful as their early year of school?

Mother : Yes, they looked frustrated and were not as active as before. In this stage, they were not productive because they just tried to listen and understood the utterances so they preferred to keep silent. Yet, they had a note in small paper, it contained several words that frequently used by their friends then they read it and tried to pronounce the word correctly.

The interview showed that in being silent, the children became more passive and did not show any progress of acquiring second language. In the first stage, they spoke their first language confidently and did not need any responses, while in this stage everything was change.

They seemed need the response to make their daily communication worthwhile. Their seriousness to get response from their friends was showed through their effort to learn more words by making their own dictionary or small note and tried to repeat pronounced the words properly.

Additionally, in this stage children of mixed-marriage tended to exercise their brain harder to comprehend and to remember every single word that their friends produced and tried to notice how the way pronounced words properly. That was why they barely spoke.

3) Starting to Speak

This stage was further step than previous stage (Being Silent). In this stage, children of mixed-marriage family started to speak English as a new or second language. This stage shows that mother's role is also significance in children's process of acquiring L2. The mother switched the home language into English in order to children not only speak English at school but also at home. This role really made a good improvement on children. They were able to produce small utterances that were used in daily communication. The following conversation was collected from the mother via Skype on March 10th 2014.

- (04) Interviewer : What do you mean by starting speaking?
 Mother : Starting speaking is starting speaking. They started to speak I mean.
 Interviewer : So, did they start to speak use the new language?
 Mother : Yes. They were able to produce some new words. Rina uttered the very first English word on 4,3 years old and Bian on 6 years old. But they still had a very few vocab. They only uttered words that frequently used by the people around them. I was surprised. As I remember, the most often word they produced was pronoun, such as I, You, She, He, They. And also there were other words, like eat, pencil, school, friends, toys, pencil box, book, food, sleep, milk, and greetings in English (good morning, good afternoon, good evening, good night).

The statement of the mother above implied that the second stage (Being Silent) of acquiring English process really made a good impact on the subject of this study. After passed being silent, in this stage, children could say some words in English. It means that children showed the improvement. The mother seemed excited because this stage was the first moment when she could hear her children said something in English.

In this stage, children of mixed-marriage family seemed to be confident to speak English as a new or second language, even though they only spoke in small utterances. Such as I, you, eat, pencil, school, friends, toys, pencil box, book, sleep, milk, and greetings in English (Good Morning, Good Afternoon, Good Evening, Good Night) or by repeating the words of others.

The interview also confirmed that words they produced the most were words they listened to the most at being silent. It indirectly declared that second language learners needed being silent to acquire new vocabularies of L2 and they would employ what they got along being silent.

4) Producing Language

It is the last process of acquiring second language. After children were able to produce some words, then they experienced this stage. In starting speaking, they could produce only words, while in the producing language stage they started to construct word by word to eventually made a sentence. The following conversation was collected from the mother via Skype on March 10th 2014.

- (05) Interviewer : Was the starting speaking the last process of acquiring English?
 Mother : No, there was still one step in which they were able to produce sentences. Let's call the stage as producing language, because I forget the term.
 Interviewer : But the language had been produced in the starting speaking stage.
 Mother : Indeed, but in the starting speaking they simply produced word, while in this stage, they uttered something in the form of complete sentences. It showed different progress, so I put this in

the different stage. This happened after they went to school for three to four months, I think.

The conversation above provided information that after few months, children accustomed to listen and read something which was delivered in English. Since they went to school, they frequently watched cartoon or kid film and this, of course, provided in English. Hence, the children were also ready to express their own thoughts and to construct their own sentences. In the early process of producing language, they uttered a basic sentence and also grammatically incorrect; however, this improved after few months. The following conversation was collected from the mother via Skype on March 10th 2014.

- (06) Interviewer : Did it mean that they started to speak English all the time?
- Mother : Of course no. In this stage they attempted to construct sentences which consisted of subject, verb and object. But sometimes, they failed because of either grammatical error or mix with Indonesian. Yah, code switching and code mixing often occurred especially when they talked to me.

Based on interview above, it is known that even though in this stage the children started to construct word by word to make a sentence, but they still, sometimes, made some errors. The errors came from the grammatical error and also the using of code mixing and code switching.

Code mixing and code switching were considered as errors due to it was kind of proof that they were unsuccessful to utter something complete in English. The mother also stated that the code mixing and code switching occurred frequently. And it occurred especially when their children spoke with her. It is because the children realized that the mother spoke Indonesian. Thus, they mixed Indonesian on their utterances when they spoke with the mother. The brain seemed automatically switched the language depended on whom they were talking with. The following conversation was collected from the mother via Skype on April 16th 2014.

- (07) Interviewer : Did both your children experience these (code

- mixing and code switching)?
- Mother : Yes, they all experienced this, especially if they communicated with me.
- Interviewer : Did it occur to all bilingual learners?
- Mother : Definitely yea, I thing all bilinguals will experience code switching and code mixing. It is natural. My children usually do this if they did not know the English. They really liked playing *ular-tangga* and they did not give another name for the game, they simply addressed it *ular-tangga*. They also addressed 'masjid' instead of 'mosque' since it is not familiar there.

It showed the fact that all second language learners might experience code mixing and code switching. It was occurred as a part of the process of acquiring second language. The learner of new language sometimes still utilized first language when they spoke in second language. Hence, the children of mixed-marriage family sometimes put Indonesian word when they tried to utter something in English.

In addition, another reason of why the second language learner used code mixing and code switching was because they did not know the exact term to deliver something in second language. For example, the children did not find the English of *ular-tangga* game, so they still named the game as *ular-tangga*. The mother also stated that code mixing and code switching also occurred if there was something that did not exist in Sydney but was exist in Indonesia and vice versa. In this situation, the children were difficult to find its name in English or Indonesian, so they would say it in the original term. For example, *becak* did not exist in Sydney but existed in Indonesia. When the children visited Indonesia they preferred to address it *becak* instead of pedicab.

In short, the finding found that to acquire English or other new languages, the children would definitely experience some stages. Based on the finding, the early stage was Employing First Language. After that they experienced being silent to learn the language deeper through listening to their surroundings. The third stage was starting to speak L2 and the last was producing language.

DISCUSSION

The data informed that the subjects of this study were children who had become familiar with one language. Then, children were introduced or required to learn a second language, that is English. This condition was called sequential bilingualism. According to Crystal (1992) "Sequential bilingualism applies to situations when one learns another language later in their life. Sequential learning of languages could occur at any age".

The data also provided a clear process of acquiring English as second language by children of mixed-marriage family. Along the process, both of children experienced the same stages of acquiring English. There were four stages that had been experienced by children of mixed-marriage in acquiring English as their second language. Those are Employ First Language, Being Silent, Starting Speaking and Producing Language. It related to the theory of Thomas and Collier (1998) who stated that there are some stages of acquiring second language. According to them the four stages are Interference, Being Silent, Code Switching and Language Loss.

Besides, the initial stage based on result was different with the first stage that proposed by Thomas and Collier. According to them the first stage is Interference. This stage is when a child makes an English error due to the direct influence of an L1 structure. For example, in Spanish, "esta casa es mas grande" means "this house is bigger." This is a normal phenomenon-a sign of a language difference, not a language disorder. Yet, the data provided different situation. The first stage based on result is Employ First Language, in which the children still employ their first language, Indonesian, at the early year of learning English. So, this study found that children of mixed-marriage family experienced different situation with the theory proposed by Thomas and Collier.

Furthermore, the following stage was being silent. This stage was the same with the second stage that was proposed by Thomas and Collier (1998). In this stage, children listened to the language used by their friends and tried to understand. Children only listened to every single word of friends and teachers. The process of recording and remembering new vocabularies began. The following theory fits with the data above.

When children are first exposed to a second language, frequently they focus on listening and comprehension. These children are often very quiet, speaking little as they focus on understanding the new language-much, in fact, as adults do when traveling in foreign countries.(Thomas and Collier, 1998:97).

After realizing that they could not communicate to their friends, the data revealed that they looked frustrated and were not as active as before. This phenomenon related to the following theory.

It should be mentioned that at times some children might get frustrated by the fact that other people, especially their peers if they attend a monolingual nursery school or playgroup, do not speak both of the languages and for example cannot understand what the child says, or do not join them in singing a song they know in the other language (Esch and Riley, 2008).

After they passed being silent, they entered the further stage, Starting Speaking. At the early process of speaking new language, the children still had few vocabularies of second language, English. So, they frequently mixed their utterances with their first language, Indonesian. As stated by Barron (2004) that mixing is often unintentional and may occur either because the child might not know the appropriate word in the other language, or might find a particular word easier to pronounce in the other language. As the children grow older, their mixing becomes more like adult code-switching.

The theory implied that mixing and switching language might be experienced by all children who learnt second language. It was also stated that the other possibility of children mixing languages was because they perhaps found that there was certain words which seemed difficult to be uttered in second language. For example, when the subjects of this study preferred to say 'masjid' instead of 'mosque', perhaps they found that it was difficult to utter mosque because the word was really uncommon in their daily communication.

CONCLUSION

Based on finding and discussions of acquisition English as L2 in children of mixed-marriage children who living in L2 country, this study concludes that in the process of acquiring English or other new languages, the children would definitely experience some stages. Based on the finding, the early stage was Employing First Language. After that they experienced being silent to learn the language deeper through listening to their surroundings. The third stage was starting to speak L2, in this stage they were confident to start utter English words but could not arranged it into sentences. And the last stage was producing language. They were able to utter more English words in right pronunciation and also could make complete sentences in English.

SUGGESTION

Since there is the difference time at starting acquiring L2 by both children, further research should be done to observe bilingual children who are not sibling and start acquiring L2 at the same age. This is to find out whether or not they have same stages and progress as two siblings in this study.

Besides, more research also needs to be done on finding effective methods for mothers to make their children maintain the L1 after they acquire L2, so there will be no possibility for children to experience language loss. Since based on this study, the mother holds the significant roles on education for their children and of course the process of acquiring language both L1 and L2.

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