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Person, number and gender markers among Kannada speaking typically developing children

Mrs. Pooja V, Ms. Rakshitha Srihari, Ms. Neha Jayakumar, Mr. Satish Kumaraswamy

Abstract

Language is a system of phonological, semantic and syntactic rules which can be applied in an orderly manner for communicative purposes. The way the child learns and acquires language is referred to as language acquisition. Language acquisition is a hierarchical process which develops from birth to several years of life. In a particular language, the rules to study the principles and processes by which sentence are constructed is referred to as syntax, a component of language. The Childs language adequacy can be determined by understanding the development of language and syntax. Appropriate morpho-syntactic operations require a comprehending and use of correct word order and organization in phrases and sentences. The PNG markers, case markers, plural markers etc. are included under the morpho-syntactical language. The present study focuses on development of PNG markers among children who are native speakers of Kannada language. The study highlights the need to carry out more research in this area for better understanding of language acquisition among these children in order to develop both assessments and intervention programmes. Presently, the lack of acquisition data has hinged the development of any standardized tests in Kannada. Hence, the present study aims to explore PNG markers in Kannada speaking typically developing children with the objective of analyzing the data of among these children across 4-8 years. The results show that most of these markers were developed by 5 years of age. The present study also discusses various studies supporting the results.

Introduction

Language is a system of phonological, semantic and syntactic rules which can be applied in an orderly manner for communicative purposes (Chomsky, 1965). Language acquisition is a hierarchical process which develops from birth to several years of life. Babbling is the earliest form of acquisition of language and it is acquired by the age of 4 6 months. The first words acquired at 1-1.6 years. The

acquisition of first words is lead by the appearance of babbling. Children have acquired some communicative skills such as requesting and asserting skills before the appearance of words(Bates, 1976; Bruner, 1974).

In human life the process of language development starts very early. Infants start without language, babies will be able to discriminate and engage in babbling by 4 months of age. The goal for many researchers who study language development is perhaps less grandiose than discovering how mind works, but is more immediate. Success in modern industrialized society depends on good verbal skills that society requires is problematic for some children (Hoff, 2009). Initial one word sentences are monosyllabic and in consonant vowel cluster form. Child does not use any syntactic or morphological markers during the two word stage.

Development of syntax

Syntax is the study of principles and process by which sentences are constructed in particular language(Noam Chomsky, 1971). Understanding language development and syntax levels can help you to determine whether your child is on track of her age. According to the Browns stage of syntax and morphological development (1973) children between the ages 15 and 30 months should have a vocabulary of about 50-60 words. Children at this stage should be using the words in their vocabulary to form simple phrases such as “the car”, “more juice” and “bridie go”. According to various speech language pathologists, these sentence demonstrate an understanding of the deeper meaning of the words and shows in simple form of what the child might say if she was more mature and able to talk in complete sentence.

From 28 to 36 months of age, your child uses consistent word order when making simple sentences. Sentences now reflect a simple understanding of tense, as children add “ing” to the end of the words. Although not yet used correctly, adding the present perfect to words shows growth in how your child is working to be understood. Children’s speech and language services indicates that children during this stage will also use a rising tone at the end of the phrase when asking a question and add present tense helping verbs such as “is” and “does” to their sentences.

Stage 3 of Brown's stages of syntax occurs between the ages of 36 and 42 months. During this stage, your child begins to use past tense, although not always in the right form. Phrases such as "me fell down", or "me go home" shows your child is beginning to understand the concepts of "how" and "when". According to Bowen, children will also begin to use possessive forms of words, such as "girl's" and "boys" when referring to objects that belong to someone else.

By ages 40 to 52 months and beyond, of Brown's Syntax Stages, your child will add articles such as "a", "an", and "the" to sentences. She is also using regular past-tense combinations such as "she jumped" and questions such as "are you going?" in the right order. Children's speech and language services indicates that "to be" verbs are also added during this time, as are third-person communicating and passive sentences such as "she is going" or "I will be going later".

Person, Number, Gender Markers

Solid syntactic skills require an understanding and use of correct word order and organization in phrases and sentences (and also the ability to use increasingly complex sentences as language develops) with appropriate morphosyntactic operations. The Morpho syntactical language includes plural markers, case markers, and PNG markers.

Agreement or concord (abbreviated AGR) happens when a word changes form depending on the other words to which it relates. It is an instance of inflection, and usually involves making the value of some grammatical category (such as gender or person) "agree" between varied words or parts of the sentence.

For example, in Standard English, one may say I am or he is, but "I is" or "he am". This is because the grammar of the language requires that the verb and its subject agree in person. The pronouns I and he are first and third person respectively, as are the verb forms am and is. The verb form must be selected so that it has the same person as the subject. The agreement based on overt grammatical categories as above is formal agreement, in contrast to notional agreement, which is based on meaning. For instance, in American English the phrase the United Nations is treated as singular for purposes of agreement even though it is formally plural.

Person number gender markers are agreement that happens between verb and a subject when a word changes form depending on the other word to which it relates. Typically developing children learn to concord between the person noun and gender through trial and error method. The development of PNG markers starts with the appearance of pronouns.

Agreement generally involves matching the value of some grammatical category between different constituents of a sentence (or sometimes between sentences, as in some cases where a pronoun is required to agree with its antecedent or referent). Some categories that commonly trigger grammatical agreement are noted below.

Person: Agreement based on grammatical person is found mostly between verb and subject. An example from English (I am vs. he is) has been given in introduction to this article. Agreement between pronoun (or corresponding possessive adjective) and antecedent also requires the selection of the correct person. For example, if the antecedent is the first person noun phrase Mary and I, then a first person pronoun (we/us/our) is required; however most noun phrases (the dogs, my cats, Jack and Jill, etc.) are third person, and are replaced by a third person pronoun (he/she/it/they etc.).

- **Number:** Agreement based on grammatical number can occur between verb and subject, as in the case of grammatical person discussed above. In fact the two categories are often conflated within verb conjugation patterns: there are specific verb forms for first person singular, second person plural and so on. Some examples:
- I really am (1st pers. singular) vs. we really are (1st pres. Plural)
- The boy sings (3rd pers. singular) vs. the boy sing (3rd pers. Plural)

Again as with person, there is agreement in number between pronouns (or their corresponding possessives) and antecedents:

- The girl did her job vs. The girls did their job

Agreement also occurs between nouns and their specifier and modifiers, in some situations. This is common in languages such French, where articles, determiners and adjectives (both attribute and predicative) agree in number with the nouns you qualify:

- Le grand homme ("the great man") vs. les grands hommes ("the great men")

In English this is not such a common feature, although there are certain determiners that occur specifically with singular or plural nouns only:

- One big car vs. Two big cars
- Much great work vs. Many great works

Gender: In languages in which grammatical gender plays a significant role, there is often agreement in gender between a noun and its modifiers. For example, in French:

- le grand homme ("the big man"; homme is masculine) vs. la grande chaise ("the big chair"; chaise is feminine)

  Such agreement is also found with predicate adjectives: l'hommeest grand ("the man is big") vs. la chaise estgrande ("the chair is big"). (However, in some languages, such as German, this is not the case; only attributive modifiers show agreement.)

In the case of verbs, gender agreement is less common, although it may still occur. For example, in the French compound past tense, the past participle agrees in certain circumstances with the subject or with an object. In Russian and most other Slavic languages, the form of the past tense agrees in gender with the subject. There is also agreement in gender between pronouns and antecedents. Examples of this can be found in English (although English pronouns principally follow natural gender rather than grammatical gender):

- The man reached his destination vs. the ship reached her/ its destination

Kannada language

Kannada, also known as **Kanarese,** is a Dravidian language spoken predominantly by people of Karnataka in southwestern India, and by significant linguistic minorities in the states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Kerala and abroad. The language has roughly 44 million speakers, who are called Kannadigas. Kannada is also as second and third language by over 12.9 million non-Kannada speakers in Karnataka, which adds up to 56 million speakers. It is one of the scheduled languages of India and the official and administrative language of the state Karnataka. The Kannada language is written using the Kannada script, which evolved from the 5th century Kadamba script. Kannada is attested epigraphically for about one and a half millennia, and literary Old Kannada flourished in the 6th century Ganga Dynasty and during the 9th century Rashtrakutta Dynasty. Kannada has an unbroken literary history of over a thousand years. Kannada literature has been presented with 8 Jnanapith awards, the most for any Dravidian language and the second highest for any Indian language.

Based on the recommendations of the Committee of Linguistic Experts, appointed by the Ministry of Culture, the government of India designated Kannada a classical language of India. As evident from above information, in Kannada language there is lack of language data on children with intellectual disability. Hence among the Kannada speaking intellectual disability children, it is difficult to visualize and describe development of plural markers during language acquisition for developing both assessment and intervention programmes it is essential that systematic observational and experimental study of acquisition of language in children in these Kannada speaking children needs to be conducted. Thereby the present study keeps in mind the above limitations and thus tries to improvise the description of PNG markers in language data among typically developing Kannada speaking children.

Need for the study

Morpho-syntactical studies in the Indian context would aid in assessment and help in establishing the baseline to set goals for morphological intervention in disabled children. The lack of acquisition data has hinged in the development of any standardized tests

in Kannada. There is a need for more normative data of acquisition grammatical in Kannada language. The present study attempts to understand the PNG markers in Kannada speaking typically developing children.

Aim of the study

The study aims to explore PNG markers in Kannada speaking typically developing children with the objective of analyzing the data of among these children across various age levels.

Methodology

Participants

20 typically developing children were participated in the study the participants were selected from in and around Dakshina Kannada. All these participants were native speakers of Kannada language

Selection Criteria

Typically Developing Children

Typically developing school going children were recruited from Kannada- medium schools within the age range of four to eight years. The children within four to eight years were preferred for the study because by four years a reasonable amount of language development occurs in a child that can be compared to adult language patterns. Thus, the mental age range of four to eight years needs largest attention for remediation of children with language disorders. Prior to conduction of the research, school authorities were explained about the purpose of the research and a written permission was obtained from them.

Inclusion Criteria

- Children between four to eight years of age
- Children who speak Kannada as their native language
- Children, selected by teachers, who best suited the criteria for recording of language samples

Exclusion Criteria

- Children with a history/complaint of any speech and/or language deficits
- Children with a history /complaint of any reading and/or writing problems
- Children who had any history/complaint of acquired hearing loss
- Children with complaint of cognitive deficits such as poor memory, attention deficit, organizational and/or sequencing issues.
- Children with a history of any transfer from more than one school
- Children with a history of any shift in the medium of instruction
- Children with a history of any academic failures.

Post-selection, these children were divided into four subgroups, Group A (4-5 YEARS), Group B (5-6 YEARS), Group C (6-7 YEARS), and Group D (7-8 YEARS).

Language Data Collection

Natural conversational samples were audio recorded, during clinician-child interactions at the time of play. Each sample was recorded in a quiet corner room within the school premises, with limited auditory and visual distraction. The recordings were a minimum of 8-10 minutes targeting one child at a time. During the recording therapist gave minimal instructions and focused on eliciting maximum natural responses from the child based on the stimuli (pictures) presented. Various picture materials were used to elicit language responses from children. All the subjects interacted using the same stimuli material.

Results

The data obtained were subjected to statistical analysis using SPSS-17 software. Statistical test used were krushkal Willis test. The result of the present study is presented below:

TABLE 1: The results for PNG markers across age

GENDER	GROUP	NUMBER	MEAN	S.D
MALE	A	10	.00	.00
	B	10	5.00	.00
	C	10	5.00	.00
	D	10	5.00	.00
FEMALE	A	10	.00	.00
	B	10	5.00	.00
	C	10	5.00	.00
	D	10	5.00	.00

As shown in table: 1, performance of male group A for PNG markers (M=.00, SD= .00) and performance of male group B, C and D for PNG markers (M= 5.00, SD= .00). The performance of female group A for PNG markers (M = .00, SD=.00) and performance of female group B, C and D for PNG markers (M= 5.00, SD=.00).

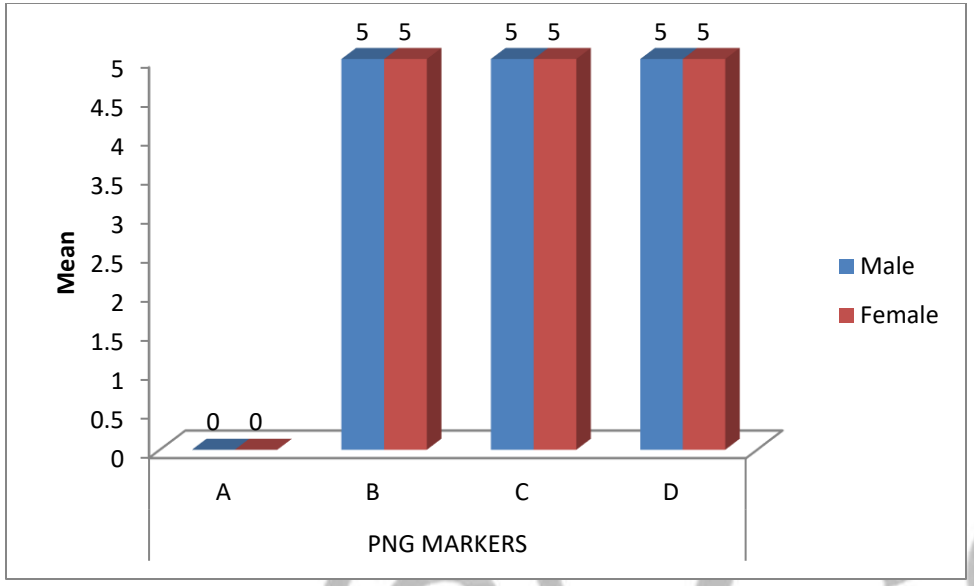

Fig1: Performance across age for PNG markers

The results of table 1 and fig 1: indicates that, the group A had mean value of .00, SD =.00 and the group B, C and D had mean value of 5.00, SD= .00 for males. The group A and had mean value of .00, SD =.00 and the group B, C and D had mean value of 5.00, SD= .00 for females. The performance across the groups A and B, C, D indicated significant differences at 0.05 level of significance. The groups A of males and females performed poorly on PNG markers in comparison with the groups B, C, D of males and females.

Discussion

The data collected in the present study served as good reference in order to understand the language aspects among typically developing children and also in children with communication disorders. It is observed that by 5-6 years of age the development of syntax was completed in the typically developing children. In PNG markers /nu/, /lu/, /ru/and /vu/ were used the most. Both first person and second person PNG markers were found to be present in the present study. This finding was contradicting with earlier studies by (Subba Rao, 1995) claimed the use of first person PNG markers more than second person, which was insignificant in the present study and the present study supported by (Vijayalakshmi, 1981), studied children in the age range of 1-5 years using the test of acquisition of syntax in Kannada (STASK). Results showed that the children used time, gender, number, case and person markers as well as prepositions, determiners, adverbs and adjectives. There was an increase in frequency as age advanced. The simple present and future habitual terms for both masculine and feminine forms were noticed in the age range of 3-4 years in the subjects using Kannada language.

The result of present study agreed with the study (Crystal, Fletcher, & Garman, 1989) observed by about 4-5 years the development of syntax was completed in TDC. The study correlates with that of (Nippold, Hesketch, Duthie, & Mansfield, 2005) who reported by 6 years of age syntax was developed but various complex features of syntax continued to develop beyond 6 years till adolescence and even till early adulthood (20-29 years) and then remained stable till middle age (40-49 years)

Conclusion

The present study included subjects from middle class families. As the data was collected in Government school set up in Dakshina Kannada. Hence there was no effect of the variables that affect spoken language such as urban v/s rural, illiterate v/s literate and cast hierarchy. The present study also correlates with western studies as in (Pungello, Iruka, Dotterer, Mills-Koonce, & Reznick, 2009). On summarizing syntactic development (Crystal et al., 1989) observed by about 4-5 years the development of syntax was completed in TDC. The study correlates with that of (Nippold et al., 2005) who reported by 6 years of age syntax was developed but various complex features of syntax continued to develop beyond 6 years till adolescence and even till early adulthood (20-29 years)

and then remained stable till middle age (40-49 years).In the present study the results reveals that by 5-6 years of age most of the PNG markers are used at high frequency by typically developing children. This study helps in documenting normal development of syntax in typically developing children of age 4-8 years hence the present study helps in both assessment and intervention programmes in children with communication disorders.

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