

# THE STRATEGIES OF ENGLISH PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE OF PRE-SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN

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## Abstract

Pre-school aged children employ certain strategies in order to acquire language, including pragmatic competence in English of pre-school aged children. The studies are to investigate the learning strategies to acquire pragmatic competence in English of pre-school aged children and to investigate the communication strategies to acquire pragmatic competence in English of pre-school aged children.

The research employs a qualitative approach with sectional design. The data are spoken speeches gathered from observation of 4 children of 4, 5, 6, and 7 years old. The collected data are analyzed by using performance analysis technique. The analysis is based on linguistic behaviors and actual speeches performed by the subjects as reflection of their pragmatic competence and strategies to acquire it.

The analysis of the data came up with the following finding. The learning strategies to acquire pragmatic competence consist of cognitive strategies and social strategies. The cognitive strategies contain four types: imitating speeches, repeating strategies, revising speeches and translating in the form of translation from Indonesian into English. The social strategies consist of two types requesting clarification and asking for inter-responses.

Second, the communication strategies to acquire pragmatic competence of pre-school aged children consist of two categories: non-verbal form and verbal form. The non verbal form include the use of pictures and songs and strategies of expressing speech contents.

The findings contribute to the development of the theory of language acquisition strategies, particularly the theories of learning strategies and communication strategies. Practically, the findings of the study can broaden the educator's knowledge of strategies in acquiring pragmatic competence of child learners.

*Keywords* : acquisition; children; verbal; non-verbal; pragmatic competence; cognitive strategies; social strategies; communication; learners.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Pre-school aged children employ certain strategies in order to acquire language, including pragmatic competence in English of pre-school aged children. The studies are to investigate the learning strategies to acquire pragmatic competence in English of pre-school aged children and to investigate the communication strategies to acquire pragmatic competence in English of pre-school aged children.

The findings contribute to the development of the theory of language acquisition strategies, particularly the theories of learning strategies and communication strategies. Practically, the findings of the study can broaden the educator's knowledge of strategies in acquiring pragmatic competence of child learners.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Language is a special complex skill that develops a child spontaneously. This opinion was expressed by Pinker in Brown (2004). Language is obtained neither unconsciously nor consciously. This process is closely related to the social value of language itself where the language is a means of communication. The process of language which is appropriate to the context of its use cannot be separated from the social and cultural value of language. Furthermore, language is a communication tool that can be considered as a determinant for the quality of communication. Language is a cultural resource and speech is a cultural practice (Duranti, 2000). Language as spiritual wealth which is owned by a speech community is a cultural resource that is used in the form of speech and writing. The use of language in the form of speech and writing was the realization of cultural wealth.

A child needs the socialization process to understand and to train themselves as members of the speech community to be accepted in their environment. Gradually, a child through the process of communicating with the closest people around them, such as their parents, their family, and developed along with their age to achieve their needs in communication. Through the socialization process, an acquisition of a child, takes place. In their

environment, a child is doing interaction process and get many inputs from it. These inputs which are obtained from a child's environment contributed to the development of their language. When children interact in their environment, they do not just practice to be a master in linguistic devices to produce grammatical utterances, but also practice using speech within the context of proper communication.

Environment plays an important role in child language acquisition. Different environments, such as the differences in cultural factors, socioeconomic of their parents, their residence, and their playground, caused the differences to their infusion. It affects the process of language acquisition. In this environment, a child is practicing to use the rules of language that suitable with the communication context, for example, pay attention to the status and role of the partners, the subject, the speech background, the use of code variation and so on.

The process of child language acquisition occurs in the mental structures. Every child is able to understand and produce a speech after internalization process in their mental structure. According to Chomsky this process can occur due to human birth comes with the built-in the form of a common abstract mechanism which is called Language Acquisition Device.

LAD which can also be referred to as the Language Acquisition Devices by Soenjono (2010) is a language acquisition device that is natural. With these tools a child can make use of language in everyday communication in accordance with their needs. Language acquisition can occur as a child's psychological development. Environment plays an important role to provide the input data in the form of language. Thus, language acquisition is influenced by congenital factors and environmental factors.

### **3. THE METHOD**

This study used a qualitative research study. The writer used the phenomenon of children language acquisition in 4 children. The children interaction with their teacher, their family and also with the researcher was observed in natural conversation.

### **4. ANALYZING DATA**

#### **4.1. Learning Strategy Of Competence**

##### **4.1.1. Cognitive Strategies in the Pragmatic Competence Acquisition Childhood Preschool**

The use of cognitive strategies in English language acquisition in early childhood include several types, namely: strategy imitation utterances as speech difficulties or errors, repeating himself or adult speech, using everyday speech patterns and the creation and improvement of the speech himself or others and the last is the translation of the word or phrases from English to Indonesian and vice versa.

##### **4.1.1.1 Mimicking**

Impersonation of speech can occur because of the desire itself or by the will of the adults who were around pre-school children. This happens because the child has not mastered a particular speech or speech difficulties in expressing it.

In preschool children in English language acquisition facing some difficulties in a few words or phrases, especially in children aged three and four years. This difficulty is increasing in children who do not receive treatment at home from parents who continually do not encourage children to communicate using English.

In early childhood, speech imitation in English language acquisition a few words or phrases with difficulties and errors narrative. Mimicking the narrative because of the difficulty occurs when children have difficulty to make the point to the partner he said. In order to meet the needs of the communication, early childhood can obtain feedback necessary word or speech by imitating the words adults around him. An adult who is close to early childhood are parents or teachers who teach the child.

##### **4.1.1.2. Repetition of speech**

Communication strategy was also used in early childhood mastering certain aspects of language by repeating utterances. And say many times. Repetition is done repeatedly naturally. It is related to the environment experienced by the child in learning English. The environment can be a family environment, peers, and school environment.

Repetition of early childhood speech made by various means, ie repetitions performed by the children themselves, repetition speech made by adults, and peers speech repetition. This is done by children to state many purposes, ensuring that adults or peers understand what it conveys something like stating the facts, stating the command, and state counsel.

The use of speech itself is a variation of that used children to master certain utterances expressing their concerns. Speech is done repeatedly and practiced repeatedly to make sure that people who want to communicate to understand what is said. At the young age of five repetitions of English speech produced alone to state the facts that happen in the environment.

#### **4.1.1.3. The use of speech patterns**

Usage patterns of speech in the target language can improve understanding and manufacturing of speech in children. Usage patterns of speech in early language acquisition is done continuously to build confidence, improve understanding, and improve skills. Some speech patterns commonly used English children were: Hello!; How are you today?; I am fine.; Good morning.; I want ....; Thank you. Preschool age children generally have experience using speech patterns in English in not so long time. At the age of three to four years the child usually introduced with some speech patterns are widely used in everyday communication, such as greeting thank you. At age three, four years seems children are still using speech patterns are simple and limited to stating something to the partner he said. Children are not able to realize the knowledge and understanding of the language of the speakers interact as adults. This is due to the limited vocabulary they have.

Delivering forgiveness, gratitude, and request a follow pragmatic expressed in a distinctive manner with the context of its use in accordance with the socio-cultural background of the speakers. To achieve mastery of language forms to express these. The following is the speech patterns of preschool children to express thanks and expressed greetings.

For preschoolers, a form of speech obtained by using everyday speech patterns are saying thank you. Speech is a form of language that expresses feelings of gratitude for having received something or got special treatment is good for speakers. For children, saying thank you is commonly used in everyday communication. Child's language environment has an important role in pattern formation in the process of speech and the possession aspect of this pragmatic competence.

#### **4.1.1.4. Correcting the speech**

Guided by the presence of mental activity, use of speech improvement strategies is done by preschoolers. With the awareness possessed by a child, preschoolers can recognize that spoken utterances are not always right. Therefore, children need to make improvements to what is meant to be understood by the partners of speech he says it well.

There are two children's awareness of errors in speech acts are: based on an understanding of their own children or partners' response. Understanding language errors and performs self-monitoring during the communication activities. In children's understanding error in the speech is based on the responses occur when he or she says something to partner and he or she gets negative response in the form of correction from his or her partner. The corrections made by the partner can be stated directly or indirectly.

In practice, children can improve their own speech which is wrong or confusing his or her partner. In everyday conversation preschoolers is not uncommon to ask partners to correct the speech. However, the partners, especially adults partners should be careful in giving corrections to the speech of children because it can cause negative effects, such as dropping the child or make children mentally frustrated in doing next speeches.

Associated with the use of speech improvement strategies, the parents or adult of the speakers in general, play an important role in providing appropriate input language to their children. In practice it is better for adults do not always make corrections or improvements on what is spoken by children. Speech correction needs to be done only for certain things only in the form of incomprehensible input so as to contribute positive language acquisition for children.

#### **4.1.1.5 Translation**

As the Indonesian-English bilingual speakers, one of the ways in which child to master the ability to express a specific intent is to do the translation from Indonesian into English. By translating children can use other languages that they master and they're saying. In translation, the child can change the expression from Indonesian into English in a variety of levels, ranging from words and phrases to the entire text. On the other side, the child can turn from English into Indonesian. Based on the results of data analysis, the translation used by children aged three to seven years and performed in two forms, namely the translation of words / phrases in Indonesian to English translation and English sentence into Indonesian.

From the results of the study on the use of speech translation in a child, it was concluded that this strategy is used by preschool children at the age of five and seven years. Children's ability to use this strategy motivated by

Indonesia-English factors. Characteristics of the performed translation of this child is a literal translation of the concept of Indonesian language structure that generates speech with a different meaning than the English language. However, it does not interfere the communication due to contextually partners can understand what is meant by children.

#### **4.1.2. Social Strategies in the Pragmatic Competence Acquisition Childhood Preschool**

Social strategies used in the acquisition of pragmatic competence in preschool children are two kinds of strategies, which consists of narrative and explanations strategies.

##### **4.1.2.1 Social Clarification Request Strategy**

Request for clarification is one of the ways in which the learner to ask for an explanation of certain aspects of the language that has not been understood and mastered by involving partners. This strategy is also used by a child to check or ensure that he has understood a particular form of speech properly. Request for clarification made by the child are vary, such as asking partner to speak slowly, paraphrasing, repeating, and explain what is meant in his speech.

To be able to use a request for clarification, the child needs to know in ways that are acceptable to ask for an explanation well. It is necessary for partners are willing to give an answer in accordance with the child's request. For children a few questions for clarification that may be filed for example what is that? Excuse me? What is the meaning? I do not hear anything.

Narrative inquiry conducted by a child is by asking partners to repeat the speech. The request is made because the child does not understand what has been told to him yet. This happens due to several causes, such as children doesn't hear what the partners he said, children are not / less attention at the time said the partners talk, the atmosphere was busy, the partners speak too soft, and others. In essence, this strategy is used when children assume that by asking partner to repeat the speech he/she should understand the speech addressed to him/her.

##### **4.1.2.2 Questions Reciprocal Responsibility Strategy**

In addition to analyze any element of awareness of children and their partners to do the activities, do question and answer on them. This is an evident of the speech that started with conversation, the boy said What is it?. This behavior illustrates the agreement of the participants to ask each other questions and answers. Furthermore, it can be said that a conscious child with a partner do communication practices. The children do not realize that they practice communication activities on which it is the process of language acquisition.

Although in doing this activity learning occurs, the activity is seen as a natural process. It is the natural process that marks a child's language acquisition process. Natural Characteristic of the process of language acquisition seems are not really aware by the children. In other words, the child does not know that he acquired the language in the activity.

Question-reciprocal responsiveness was conducted to declare child to questions, answer questions, and stating conclusions. Using a question-reciprocal responsiveness we can indicate a child's desire to interact with the partner. In this way, children have the opportunity to practice communication, which states the question and answer the question. This method can simultaneously improve child language acquisition, particularly linguistic forms to express the questions and answer questions. In addition, this cooperation can improve social closeness with a partner he said. Children with social closeness can be more open to express something that ultimately affect children the flexibility to express a variety of purposes in communication practices.

#### **4.1.3 COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE STRATEGY**

##### **Use of Verbal Forms Strategy**

##### **4.1.3.1 The Use of Speech Strategy**

In general, speakers who have not mastered the target language well to transfer the speech code in the form of the use of these terms in English or any other language is more controlled when communicating in the target language. In this study, preschool children transferred the code in the form of the use of words / phrases and sentences in BI when communicating in English. However, this is not always the result of other forms of speech in the Indonesian language is more controlled than the English language, because children can master the terminology in both languages well.

As the Indonesian-English bilingual speakers, sometimes children more control of most terms in Indonesian and in control of most of the other terms in English. Selection term Indonesian and English by children based on the context of the communication. This is because, for the subject of this study, Indonesian and English learned

and mastered the same since the beginning. Shape-shifting speech codes that were examined in this section is the use of the words / phrases in the Indonesian language and the use of the phrase in English. Both forms of transfer of the code shown in the speech data children ages 5, 6, and 7 years were used to express pragmatic functions vary.

#### **4.1.3.2 Use of Words / Phrases English and Indonesian**

At the age of 7 years from the BI code switching into English in the form of the use of the word / phrase when children communicate using BI. The use of the word / phrase English by the age of 7 is done to acknowledge your facts.

The child needs to understand when to use one language and when to use another language. However, in these cases, bilingual speakers can upgrade even mixed code speech codes according to their convenience in using the language. The important thing to understand is that if someone asks children to use Indonesian language then he should respond to the Indonesian. Conversely, if someone asks to use English so he should answer in English. In this case the child does not show it. For children aged 7 years who had entered the early stages of language acquisition that can be tolerated. In the early stages only concerned with the competence, children how to be conveyed to the partners. With the process of language acquisition in subsequent stages, through the practice of everyday communication is possible the child may have the knowledge and skills to use the second language under their control in the context of its use.

#### **4.1.3.3 Use sentence in Indonesian**

As one of the strategies used by speakers to convey intent by using elements of other languages, the transfer of speech codes can be expressed in the form of the use of sentences in another language which is generally mastered by children. The use of speech codes diversion strategy is characterized by the characteristic use of sentences in Indonesian when he said children and partners are communicating using English. Transfer of the speech code in the form of the use of sentences in Indonesian is done by children ages 5,6,7 years to make the point.

At the age of 7 years, the transfer of speech codes in the form of a sentence using the Indonesian language. The statement in the Indonesian language is expressed spontaneously by the child when the conversation took place in English.

Children motivated by the child's ability to speak Indonesian and a little English which has been given by his parents since the beginning of the acquisition process. As bilingual children do not have trouble to use two languages. In these data, the child demonstrated the ability to speak Indonesian and English language in accordance with the expression he wanted to irritation. The transfer was done because the speech code assumes Indonesian children can express their feelings better than English. Based on these observations, bilingual children tend to put Indonesian and English as a variety of the same. This is shown when the child answered something kids tend to use Indonesian. The partner said using English for communication while children responded with the Indonesian language. Although the use of two languages in this communication but communication happens keep it running properly and in accordance with the existing context.

The transfer function of the speech code at the age of 7 is an attempt to improve the effectiveness of communication. The achievement of the speech communication effectiveness is demonstrated by the absence of communication disorders for partners to understand the speech of children recalled because children can be the Indonesian language properly. In addition to the achievement of the effectiveness of communication, transfer of code from English into English is also an opportunity for children to practice the Indonesian language in communication. Thus, children can practice and improve their fluency Indonesia that can be owned the two languages well until one day he grows up. This issue deserves attention because of differences in the level of proficiency in one can affect the needs that exist in one's personal In this case, it is to encourage children to communicate using the language that he controlled. Meanwhile, in other situations there are norms of society that he said forced him to use other languages, which may have little or no control. In connection with it, as bilingual speakers in the process of child language acquisition need to be able to develop the ability of these languages so that they will not experience conflict between their personal needs and demands of the community he said.

The use of another language code, the Indonesian language, the conversation was intended to mark the different forms of speech which is the use of words that is worth feeling rough so be more able to express aggravation child. 7 year olds behavior is consistent that one of the causes of excess code switching code of another language to express something, in this case the aggravation. In this case, Indonesian has more potential than the English language so that in the event the child code switching from English to Indonesian.

The achievement of the speech communication effectiveness is demonstrated by the absence of communication disorders for partners to understand the speech of children recalled because children can be the

Indonesian language properly. Opportunity to support this practice in training children improve their fluency and Indonesia that can be owned the two languages well.

## **4.2. Strategic Use of Nonverbal Form**

The strategy uses a form of nonverbal preschoolers used to express a specific intent to interact with the partner said. Along with the development of the child's age, nonverbal forms used vary. The communication strategy is used by preschoolers to make the point of what to say or to ensure that partners understand what is said. This strategy can be done by children in various forms, through movement, through song, through pictures and also through the game.

### **4.2.1 Use of Movement**

For those speakers who have not mastered the language completely, movement (body) is an effective way to communicate. And for those who have little speakers are perfectly mastered the language, gestures can be used to facilitate communication is going on. At preschool age children using the form in the form of nonverbal gestures shown by children aged four to seven years. The use of nonverbal forms made to state facts about the size of an object to the partner he said. Forms used nonverbal form of words and gestures as a clear supporter of the words she told.

The use of nonverbal forms of 4-year olds have different characteristics with the use of a form of nonverbal children aged 6 years. At the young age of 4 years, the accompanying form of nonverbal speech minimal, which is a narration of the words or parts of words. As for children 6 years old son has been using speech clearer or more expressive body movements. The form is also used nonverbal clearer in describing something. Children try to make use of shape in the form of nonverbal body movements of its members to make the point very clear to the partners said.

The description indicates that the use of non-verbal forms in the data serve to support limited verbal statement that the child may want to clarify the intent expressed to partners he said. Without the use of any form of nonverbal children, child verbal utterances in the conversation is not well understood. In both forms of non-verbal data function effectively to state the facts.

The fact the use of nonverbal forms of child proves that children aged 3 years has been able to overcome the barriers of communication in a way that it has the right, ie, by using body movements to facilitate the intent to express the partner said. In practice communication skills children develop mastery of verbal utterances to make the point that wish expressed in both data acquisition through vocabulary and understanding of concepts anakmengetahui great significance and size of an object.

Based on the results of these studies concluded that this form of nonverbal communication is an effective strategy to use children in the early stages of language acquisition. How this is done by children ages 4 to 7 years in different forms. The use of this form of nonverbal child describes efforts to overcome the limitations of language or to demonstrate the ability of expression for children who have the ability to speak well. This method is effectively used to overcome communication barriers so that the communication process can proceed smoothly. The effectiveness of this method is characterized by a positive response to all partners involved in the conversation recalled by children. This also shows how the acceptance of communication. Acceptance is motivated by the lack of understanding of the limited partners said the child's language skills and the absence of obstacles for said partners to understand the behavior of the child's language. Ease of understanding is derived from non-verbal forms used in the context of the express intent to help the situation at the time of said incident took place.

### **4.2.2 Use of Images**

The use of images is a form of communication strategies are characterized by the child's behavior with the use of images as a substitute for other forms of speech that has not been mastered and is considered to be more effectively used to express a specific intent to partner she said. Shape images used child is the image of its own that are tailored to the purpose and function of communication to be achieved by children

How to convey the child's imagination through pictures done so that partners can understand what he said is more easily. Unique way adopted children in the practice of communicating serves to express his imagination that the election is done the way children in line with the general characteristics of images and symbols proposed by Mehrabian (1987) and Muhammad (1999), ie, images and symbols are the way humans to express feelings depends on the context of use, and understanding requires a thorough interpretation of the pattern. Based on the views of experts, the use of drawings by children aged 5 years is the way children express feelings of understanding can be obtained based on the context. Response partners said in a speech presented show that said

partners praised the results achieved by the child. Likewise, the child who would be happy to receive praise from the said partners said. Thus, the ways in which the child is an effective measure to achieve the purpose of communication.

#### 4.2.3 Using Games and Songs

The use of games and songs is a communication strategy that is characterized by the child's behavior with the use of the song as a substitute for other forms of speech that have not mastered the child to express a specific intent to partner she said. Similar to the use of images, the use of songs in preschool children found in the speech of children aged 5 years to 7 years. Games and songs are used child is the song that is often sung and heard and known by the partner he said. The selection of songs by the children adjusted to the intention expressed by the child who wants to partner she said.

The use of songs by the children in these data serve to express preference to partner she said. In this case, the child meant to convey his mood so he went back to a situation where he used to be loved and pampered by his mother. Lyrics of songs used child is the proper form of speech to make the point that the child wanted to put forward. The accuracy of this song selection shows that the child has the ability to determine the form of speech that should be used to express meaning. In this context, the child wants to enable the message contained in the lyrics of the song to life. With lyrics such child intends to recall his mother's love song to him this kind of the psychological impact that is different from the other songs.

### 5. THE RESULT

Based on the analysis that the use of learning strategies in the preschoolers pragmatic competence acquisition have several characteristics that appear in the type and variety of types, causes and functions of its use. The entirety of using the type and variety of types learning strategies in preschoolers pragmatic competence acquisition.

The use of learning strategies in the preschoolers of acquiring pragmatic competence process is caused by various factors, such as the developmental age, level of proficiency, bilingual, and the intensity of input and interaction. The influence of developmental age of the child towards in using of learning strategies in the pragmatic competence acquisition indicated by the differences of learning strategies that used at every level of the childhood age. The higher of a child's age, learning strategies that used is more plentiful and varied. This is related to the findings of this study support the findings of Oxford (1990) that the developmental age take effect on the language acquisition process.

A child's level of proficiency plays an important role in the selection and the use of various types learning strategies. One aspect of the child's level proficiency is the length of time to learn a language. According to Ellis (1986), the length of time to learn a language will support the level mastery of language, especially on the success in mastering communication competence. For the preschoolers, the length of time to learn a language known by the time differences in starting to learn a language, in age appropriate. From the findings of this research indicated that the differences of level language proficiency effect the differences of characteristics type and variety of types in learning strategies that children used.

The use of cognitive strategies in English language acquisition in early childhood include several types, namely: imitation, repeating, using every day speech patterns and the creation and improvement of the speech himself for others and the last is the translation of the word or phrases from English to Indonesian and vice versa. The role of input and interaction intensity gave effect for the preschoolers acquisition of pragmatic competence at the use of all types and variations of types in learning strategies. Some of speech impersonation learning strategies, speech repetition, the use of speech patterns, translation, clarification requests, and bilateral the responsiveness question used by preschoolers that influenced an input and interaction from language environment. All children's behavior in speech imitation occurs in naturally interactions. In the process of interaction the children can do a variety of things, including imitation of speech, to improve their pragmatic competence.

Clarification is one of the ways in which the learner asks for an explanation of certain aspects of the language that has not been understood by involving. This strategy is also used by children to check or ensure that he has understood a particular form of speech properly. There are some variety of clarification, repeating, and explaining what is meant in his utterances.

Bilingual factor plays an important role in learning strategies used by preschoolers. This is proven by using the learning strategies based on other languages. The relevance of a child bilingual factors with learning strategies indicated by the use of translation strategies, translation both words phrases Bahasa to English and the sentence translation of Bahasa to English. With that way, children can take the advantage of Bahasa as a foundation for understanding. The application of this translation shows that preschoolers have an ability to use learning strategies that categorized as interlingual strategy.

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