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THE ACQUISITION OF MALAY SYNTAX AMONG FIVE YEARS OLD CHILDREN: ANALYSIS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF MENTALIST THEORY

Burhan Murshidi Baharon[1] Sharil Nizam Sha'ri[2] Karim Harun[3]

ABSTRACT

The field of language acquisition is divided into three parts namely syntax, semantic, and phonological acquisition. Previous studies have found that children's most common types of sentences are declarative sentences compared to interrogative sentences, exclamatory sentences, and command sentences. Thus, this study discusses aspects of the acquisition of Malay syntax among Malay children using the Mentalist Theory approach by focusing on the types and patterns of Malay sentences. This study was conducted at Tunas Permata Kindergarten, Faculty of Education, UKM with five-year-old girl. The research data was obtained through a storytelling activity where the researcher showed a picture and asked the respondent to tell a story based on the picture while in the coloring activity, the respondent was asked to tell a story while doing the coloring activity. The researcher recorded the sessions using a smartphone. Children's syntax mastery level is measured using Mean Length of Utterance (MPU). The results of the study shown that the type of declarative sentences was the most used compared to interrogative sentences, exclamatory sentences, and command sentences. This means that the tendency of children to produce declarative sentences followed by other sentences shows the level of language acquisition parallel to the level of self-development of five-year-old children based on the Mentalist Theory. This respondent can also produce basic sentences according to their patterns and compound sentences. The production of basic sentence patterns is seen to be higher than compound sentence patterns.

Keywords: *Syntax, Mentalist, Malays, Language acquisition, Child five years*

Introduction

Psycholinguistics is an interdisciplinary science that results from the merging of two disciplines, namely psychology, and linguistics. Aitchison (1989) defines psycholinguistics as the study of language and intellect. This discipline has three areas of thrust, namely; first, aspects related to the acquisition of knowledge of the first language or mother tongue; second, aspects related to the process of understanding language inputs; and third, aspects related to memory and storage of language information or language knowledge. This study will focus on the first thrust area, which is to examine the acquisition of first language knowledge. The study of language acquisition covers the acquisition of syntax, semantic, and phonological aspects (Mangantar Simanjuntak, 2016).

1 Burhan Murshidi Baharon, Faculty of Modern Language and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, burhanmurshidi@gmail.com

2 Sharil Nizam Sha'ri, PhD, Faculty of Modern Language and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, sharil@upm.edu.my

3 Karim Harun, PhD, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, The National University of Malaysia, linguist@ukm.edu.my

In this study, only the acquisition of syntax aspects will be discussed. Most studies of language acquisition include the study of syntax aspects seen by behaviorists and mentalists. According to the behaviorist trend, mastery of the syntax system is the result of the child's relationship with the caregiver. Caregivers adapt their speech to the child so that it is easy to imitate. The behaviorist view is formulated in the 'motherese' model. According to this model, caregivers are always aware and follow the child's level of syntax mastery by providing the most appropriate stimulus so that syntax mastery runs smoothly. This trend argues that the mastery of the syntax system is mechanical in nature and occurs through the process of imitation, that is through the process of stimulation and response.

The mentalist trend rejects the view of the behaviorist trend which states that the ability to acquire syntax is mechanical in nature. They see language acquisition as a very complex process. They state that children born into the world have been provided with a language acquisition device or LAD (Language Acquisition Device). The mentalist school argues that the child's syntax system is mastered through a process of adaptation. Children will adapt the syntax system of universal Nahu to the syntax system of their first language. Therefore, the function of language stimulation is not for the rehearsal process but for the adaptation process (Zulkifley Hamid, 2006). In other words, language acquisition is much more difficult than stimulus-response.

Although the study of Malay children's language acquisition has been done by many researchers such as Abdul Rasid Jamian (2002), Mhd. Amn Arsyad and Vijayaletchumy Subramanian (2006), Marzalina Mansor (2011), Tan Hock Thye (2002), Tay Meng Guat (2006) and Nina Hyams and Robyn Orfitelli (2015) studies that focus on aspects of syntax acquisition are still lacking. Thus, this study aims to analyze the acquisition of syntax among five-year-old Malay children, that is, in terms of the ability to produce types of Malay sentences. In addition, this study will also discuss the structure and form of Malay sentence patterns that can be constructed and used by five-year-old Malay children.

A Study of Children's Acquisition of Syntax

Studies on the acquisition of Malay syntax among children have been numerous. Most studies focus on the acquisition of certain syntax aspects. Abdul Rasid Jamian's (2002) study focuses on the type and syntax structure of the Malay language. His research subjects consisted of 48 preschool children in the city and the countryside who were five to six years old. A total of 25 people at Tabika Dato' Ahmad Razali, a nursery in the city, and a total of 23 people at Tabika Kampung Tasik Tambahan in the countryside of Ampang district, Selangor were used as the study subjects. To obtain information about preschool children's mastery of Malay syntax, this study uses a survey and interview approach that uses questionnaires and interviews using pictures as stimulation tools. The qualitative research data approach is a description of the mastery of the Malay language syntax of preschool children in the city and outside the city. Meanwhile, quantitative data includes calculations based on frequency distribution and Mean Length of Utterance (MLU). This study found that preschool children have mastered the types of Malay syntax and the Mean Length of Utterance (MPU) of sentences produced by urban children is 4.85 words for *ayat penyata*, 4.41 words for *ayat tanya*, 4.18 words for *ayat seruan* and 4.19 words for *ayat perintah*. The Mean Length of Speech for children in rural areas shows 4.40 words for *ayat penyata*, 4.19 words for *ayat tanya*, 4.72 words for *ayat seruan*, and 4.29 words for *ayat perintah*. From the point of view of sentence construction, the findings show that most children produce sentences structured with *frasa nama + frasa kerja* (FN+FK) and *frasa nama + frasa adjektif* (FN+FA).

A study of the acquisition of morphology and syntax among Malay children at the stage before adult grammar using Mentalist Theory was conducted by Mhd. Amn Arsyad and Vijayaletchumy Subramaniam (2006). This study was conducted with children around the Sri Serdang area. The rationale for choosing this place is that the children in this area come from families that speak Malay and are less influenced by regional and national Malay dialects. Through the observation method, the researcher observes spontaneous language acquisition, that is when the child interacts with adults. In addition, the researcher also chatted and asked questions with the children. To stimulate children to interact with the researcher and his friends, concrete materials such as pictures and objects in the children's living environment were used. The results of the study show that collaborative activities or cooperation in language interaction between children and caregivers can provide the most suitable context for language learning. The results of the study prove that children's ability to master nouns is based on the words that are always used at home. Children will only use simple and obvious words from their observations. Children will not use abstract nouns. This is because children can only follow words that are considered easy and easy for them to follow. The acquisition of children's nouns does not happen arbitrarily. In this acquisition process, children use simplification strategies to describe the meaning they have mastered. However, these forms are not yet established in their knowledge. Overall, this study can describe the general characteristics of the growth and development of Malay children's language rather than providing an overview of the growth patterns of affixes and word types in the children's language studied.

A study on the acquisition of children's question sentences at the age of two years (2+) was done by Marzalina Mansor (2011). This is a preliminary study that aims to report on the forms of Malay question sentences produced. This study found that children at this age are more dominant with the use of question sentences without question words. While the use of interrogative sentences with interrogative pronouns '*apa*' and '*mana*' is used by two-year-old children with the basic form and there are times when the user is more varied. In addition, the findings of the study also show that children at the age of two like to use closed interrogative sentences, which are questions using the word '*boleh*'.

Mashudi and Tan Hock Thye (2002) have also conducted a study of early morphological and syntax acquisition among Malay children from the age of 15 to 24 months. The discussion focuses on the stages that children go through, such as one-syllable two-word utterances and three-word utterances, and finally, utterances that exceed three words. At each stage, the main traits that emerge are said to be related to the child's cognitive growth. On the whole, the level of mastery that children first acquire is just a few content words that are names, work, and properties related to the children's environment and that attract them, then accompanied by some task words that refer to demonstratives and prepositions. If it is seen that is very noticeable at the level of this one word because of the absence of morphological processes involving the process of affixation, pluralization, and multiplication. This phenomenon is not noticeable until the child is 24-26 months old. Two-word utterances are reviewed from the point of view of behavior and structure. Next, the treatment angle has two possibilities. The first possibility is because it has the meaning as stated and the second possibility has a much wider meaning than what is said especially in the speech of two words that pause. In addition, for the case of two- and three-word utterances, it was found that the children who were tested had started to acquire classes that cover the categories N (*nama*), K (*kerja*), S (*sifat*), Kd (*kata depan*), Tan (*kata tanya*), Naf (*kata nafi*) and Prt (*partikel*). In some cases, there has also been a transformation phenomenon. In the case of more than three utterances, two children began to show the transformation process of dropping and inserting. This shows that children are innovative and creative in the construction of formulas.

In addition to the Malay language, the first language syntax acquisition study has also been done on the Iban language by Tay Meng Guat (2006). In this study, the subject of the study is a native Iban-speaking child aged 3 years and 5 months from the Dua-Betong Division area who lives with his parents and a one-year-old sister. The data used for the analysis of the study is authentic data obtained through audio recording. The data was analysed based on three main characteristics of syntax aspects, namely sentence length, syntax structure, and the number of utterances per speaking turn. Calculation of Mean Length of Utterance (MPU) according to Brown's Stages of Development is used to determine the language development level of the child concerned. The way to calculate MLU is to divide the number of morphemes by the number of utterances.

$$\textbf{MLU} = \frac{\textbf{Number of Morphemes}}{\textbf{Number of Utterances}}$$

MLU (Mean Length of Utterance) or Mean Length of Utterance is a type of index to calculate the development or mastery of children's language in general. MLU is used as a measuring stick for a child's linguistic productivity. Its validity depends on the data that can be collected by a researcher. The MLU acquired by a child will be referred to the Table of Acquisition of Sentence Forms Within Brown's Stages of Development to determine the stage of acquisition or syntactic development of the child in question. The results of MPU analysis of the speech of children aged 3 years and 5 months is MPU 2.38, which is a level below the expected chronological age in the development of children's language mastery according to Brown's Stages of Development. These children also use various sentences that change according to the situation and depending on the function to be conveyed. In addition, these children's language proficiency is in Late Phase II and is beginning to transition to Early Phase III. Based on the 50 sentences spoken by Joy, the total number of morphemes is 119. This means that Joy is included in Final Stage II in Brown's Stages of Development and will move to Early Phase III when reaching MLU 2.5. Based on Brown's Stages of Development Table, the findings of MLU 2.38 are in line with children who are within the expected chronological age of 30 months or within the age range of 24:7-35:5.months. This means that Joy has not yet reached the expected level based on her chronological age, 3:5 which should reach MLU 3.8. However, MLU calculation is not an absolute determinant for measuring a child's language development. Children's speech is still tied to holophrases and telegraphic language. Children often use one-word and two-word sentences. Next, the noun phrase is the minimum sentence that is most often used by the child. Finally, in terms of turn-takers, these children only have a role to answer the questions presented in the conversation.

Another study was also conducted by Nina Hyams and Robyn Orfitelli (2015) entitled The Acquisition of Syntax aimed at identifying how children acquire their mother tongue. This study examines factors that are the main concern of linguistic theory and cognitive science in general. The results of this study show that there is a clear understanding that humans in particular can adapt to syntax acquisition and that language development is driven by environmental factors. Children will do all this in a very short period based on relatively limited evidence, without the benefit of correction, instructions, or clear information about grammatical errors and mostly from what they know and it is not transparent to present it in the language of adults who are around them. The acquisition problem couched in these terms is often referred to as a logical problem of language acquisition (LPLA) (Chomsky, 1965; Baker & McCarthy, 1981).

The LPLA can be illustrated using the following sentences:

(1) a. Ernie looks like he rode his bike to school today.

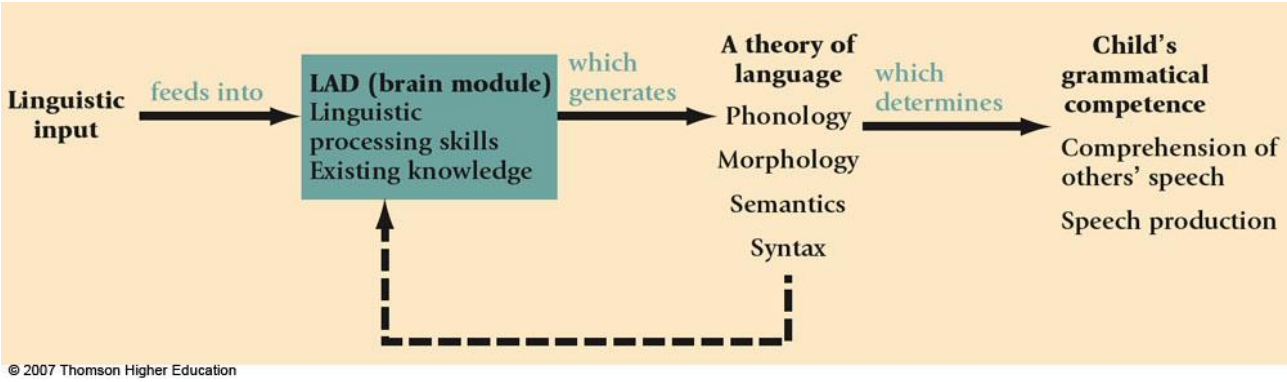
b. It looks like Ernie rode his bike to school today.

The sentences in (1) seem to be simple paraphrases of each other, and indeed, in certain situations either sentence could be felicitously uttered. For example, imagine Ernie is standing next to his bicycle in front of a school building, wearing a bicycle helmet. In that case we might equally well utter sentence (1a) or (1b). However, now imagine we're looking at a classroom. In it we see Ernie's desk and his bicycle helmet is under the desk, but the classroom is empty because all the children are at recess. In this case sentence (1b) is still a perfectly appropriate utterance, but (1a) is decidedly odd, because we have no visible evidence of Ernie himself. The contrast is subtle. Both sentences are fully grammatical, but they are not equivalent. They have different evidential requirements. Clearly, this is not something children are instructed on.

Moreover, it is unlikely that they have any kind of (negative) evidence which would lead them to know that (1a) is not felicitous in certain contexts. Yet, children as young as two-years old use both kinds of sentences in the appropriate situations (Rett & Hyams, 2013; Rett, Hyams, & Winans, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

This study applies the Mentalist Theory approach. According to Mentalist Theory, the development of children's language acquisition is influenced by the existence of a tool known as the Language Acquisition Device (LAD). LAD is located in the left hemisphere of the brain which is carried from birth and enables children to acquire their mother tongue easily and quickly (Ahmad Foaad Hashim, 1983; Mangantar Simanjuntak 2016). According to Samsu Yaakob and Marzuki Nyak Abdullah (1988:21), mentalists think that children are born with an innate capacity that forms language ability and the process of language acquisition depends on maturity. The Mentalist Theory also connects mental reality with actual language acts. Therefore, if there is no exposure, then language acquisition will not occur because the language mastery tool or machinery does not get any material to process (Abdullah Hassan, 1983). The figure of Language Acquisition Device as below:



Methodology

This study used a qualitative method. This study will use interview methods, picture stimulation and coloring activities to obtain data. This study was conducted at Tadika Tunas Permata, Faculty of Education, The National University of Malaysia, Bangi, Selangor. To obtain data, the researcher interviewed a single respondent, who was a girl, aged five-years-old, and was a native speaker of Malay language. This kindergarten has classes according to age, namely 3, 4, 5, and 6 years old.

Data was obtained through colouring and storytelling activities. In the storytelling activity, the researcher showed a picture and asked the respondent to make up a story based on the picture provided.

On the other hand, during the colouring activity, the respondent was asked to tell a story while engaging in the colouring activity. The researcher recorded the activities with the use of a smartphone. This session for coloring activities takes 1 hour and 30 minutes.

In the storytelling and coloring activities, the researcher presented eight stimulus pictures that were used based on the children's interests, namely pictures of animals and pictures of games. The researcher also asked questions to the research subjects based on a list of questions prepared in advance by the researcher.

The acquisition of Malay syntax was calculated using Mean Length of Utterance (MLU). The interview activity with the subject was carried out in two sessions and each session took 40 minutes. When the interview process is carried out, if there are questions related to issues that need to be discussed, the researcher will ask the respondent immediately.

The data obtained were analysed and categorised according to sentence types based on the *Tatabahasa Dewan* (2010). The researcher will also analysed the type of structure and form of sentence patterns that can be produced by the respondent. The analysed data will also determine the level of syntax acquisition. Mean Sentence Length (MPU) was used to analyze the sentences in this study as a method to determine syntax acquisition found in Brown's (1973) MPU assessment. The formula to get MPU is to use the number of words divided by the total number of utterances in each utterance. Pictures can also be described as a concrete stimulus to trigger their ability to produce memory and allow the researcher to record and record as many sentences as possible using a smartphone.

Findings

This study will discuss the findings of aspects of syntax acquisition as follows:

i. The number of sentence types produced by children
ii. Construction of children's sentences
iii. Mean Length of Utterance

Acquisition Of Sentence Types

This study managed to collect a total of 164 sentences spoken by 5-year-old Malay children. The types of sentences spoken by children consist of declarative sentences, interrogative sentences, exclamatory sentences, and command sentences. The total percentage of acquisition of this type of sentence is as in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Children's Acquisition of Sentence Types

Sentence Types	Number of Sentences (n)	Sentence Percentage (%)
Ayat penyata	128	78
Ayat tanya	19	11.6
Ayat seruan	12	7.3

Ayat perintah	5	3.1
Number of Sentence	164	100

Based on the data above, the most used sentence type is *ayat penyata* spoken by children at the age of 5. The tendency of children to say *ayat penyata* followed by *ayat tanya* shows the level of language acquisition parallel to the level of self-development of 5-year-old children. At this stage, children use language to tell stories and discuss things in their experiences. During this time too, children like to ask about something that is around their language experience. Here is an example of a sentence uttered by the respondent:

a. Ayat penyata

Example of Sentence
Ni gambar kura-kura
Mak dia gulung tilam
Payung jadi rosak
Budak mancing ikan
Kereta rosak

a. Ayat tanya

Example of Sentence
Ni gambar apa?
Kenapa dia tak pakai selipar?
Kenapa orang ni tak pakai baju?"
Kenapa bas terbabas?
Kenapa rambut dia putih?

a. Ayat seru

Example of Sentence
Eh, beratnya kereta ni!
Wah, tingginya rumah ni!
Eh, sejuk air ni!
Aduh, berat kotak ni!
"*Wah, cantiknya baju abang!*

b. Ayat perintah

Example of Sentence
Boleh tolong Aina warnakan ayam
Jangan conteng meja nanti kotor
Tolong warnakan laju sikit
Jangan lari
Tolong susun kertas ni

Construction of children's sentences

In Malay language, the basic sentence pattern is divided into four types, guided by the types of elements present as constituents of the sentences, namely the types of subject and predicate. Subject constituents are generally filled with noun phrases, while predicate constituents are filled with four different elements, namely noun phrases, verb phrases and adjective phrases. Table 3 shows the four types of predicate constituent filler elements that produce four types of basic sentence patterns in Malay, namely:

Table 3 Basic Malay Sentence Pattern

Pola	Subject	Predicate
Pola 1	*Frasa nama*	*Frasa nama*
Pola 2	*Frasa nama*	*Frasa kerja*
Pola 3	*Frasa nama*	*Frasa adjektif*
Pola 4	*Frasa nama*	*Frasa sendi nama*

Source: Nik Safiah Karim et al. (2010).

From the research conducted, the researcher found that 5-year-old children are able to produce *ayat dasar* according to their patterns and also *ayat majmuk*. These children have produced as many as 149 (90.85%) *ayat dasar* and 15 (9.15%) *ayat majmuk.*

Table 4 *Ayat Dasar* and *Ayat Majmuk* for Children Aged 5 Years

Construction of children's sentences	Number of Sentences (n)	Sentence Percentage (%)
Ayat dasar	149	90.85
Ayat majmuk	15	9.15
Total sentence	164	100

In the story-telling session, the researcher found that the 5-year-old child did not speak and told stories in simple sentence patterns. On the other hand, this child can already tell a story using a rather complicated sentence pattern, which is a *ayat majmuk*. Based on Table 4, the syntax acquisition of 5-year-old children that covers *ayat tunggal* and also *ayat majmuk*. The child's abilities are also subjected to the child's family situation, i.e. whether the family belongs to a high, medium, or low socioeconomic level. According to Atan Long (1978), the advantage of children from high socioeconomic families is the maturity of forming sentences and having a more mature sentence structure.

From a number of these 5-year-old children's sentences, the researcher classified their sentences according to the four sentence patterns found in the Malay language. Here are some sentences produced by the children based on their patterns.

a. Frasa Nama (FN) + Frasa Nama (FN)

Example of Sentence
Rabbit tu arnab
Ni monyet
Ini gasinglah
Ni budak lelaki
Itu lori

b. Frasa Nama (FN) + Frasa Kerja (FK)

Example of Sentence
Dia angkat tangan
Kura-kura menang
Dia guna jarum
Dia jadi rosak
Orang jahit baju

c. Frasa Nama (FN) + Frasa Adjektif (FA)

Example of Sentence
Pensel ni pendek
Mata hitam
Baju mak merah
Paku merah
Ni pink

d. Frasa Nama (FN) + Frasa Sendi Naman (FSN)

Example of Sentence
Kura-kura di depan

In relation to the findings of sentence production by 5-year-old children based on their patterns, it can be said that children are able to master Malay sentences based on the relationship of meaning with the context of a particular situation.

The researcher found that these children can form *ayat majmuk* even though the number is not many. Although the sentences do not have a more mature structure, they are enough to explain the syntactic mastery of 5-year-old children and are appropriate for their age level. Some examples of compound sentences are as follows:

a. *Mak dia ikat tali kasut sebab dia tersalah buat*
b. *Dia nak siram pokok bunga tapi salah siram baju*

c. *Dia kena tangkap polis sebab curi barang nanti duduk penjara*

Mean Length of Utterance

The findings of the study show that the Mean Length of Utterance for Malay children is 4.40 as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Mean Length of Utterance for 5-Year-Old Malay Children

Total Sentence	Total Morpheme	Mean Length of Utterance
164	722	4.40

Based on the 164 sentences spoken by this child, the total number of morphemes is 722. Therefore, this child's MLU is 4.40. This means that these children are included in Final Stage V in Brown's Stages of Development, the MLU 4.40 finding is in line with children who are in the expected chronological age of 41-46 months.

Based on the MLU study done by Brown, there are 6 levels. A study done by Bishop and Adams (Mean Length of Utterance: On-line) found that MPU at the age of 4:5 is a good indicator to make expectations about children's reading ability at the age of 8. However, the use of the MLU concept as a yardstick for language proficiency among children is still a controversial issue. Therefore, children who are 5 years old belong to the 6th level category which is MLU of 4.5 and above.

The age of children who are 5 years old, which is 60 months, shows a significant difference in the MLU of *ayat penyata* and *ayat seruan*. This shows that children produce *ayat seruan* to assert something or things. Based on this, it shows that children will tend to ask about unknown things to find out more. The highest mean is shown for the *ayat penyata* category which is 4.40 which will explain that the higher the MLU of a child, then it is expected that the higher the language proficiency of the child. However, MLU calculation is not an absolute determinant for measuring a child's language development.

Based on the findings obtained by using the Mean Length of Utterance it was found that in children aged 5 years the ability of children to produce speech is based on experience and factors of exposure and stimulation. Children can say longer *ayat penyata* to tell about things or things they know. The same is the case with *ayat tanya* and *ayat perintah*, that is, children can raise questions and requests to know something more clearly and understandably. If you look at *ayat seruan*, children are more capable of producing them because they like to express feelings of wonder and fear in the face of amazing situations or things.

Discussion

By using Mentalist Theory, the researcher wants to identify whether all normal children will be able to acquire language if given exposure to their mother tongue. If these things are the same, then the results of the study showing that the respondents have successfully spoken four types of sentence patterns, namely, *ayat penyata*, *ayat tanya*, *ayat seruan*, and *ayat perintah* will be the same. This is also reinforced by the statement made by Mangantar Simanjuntak (2016) who states that the language structure is very complicated or complex and universal, but can be acquired by all children in a very short time, which is approximately within 3 to 4 years. Thus, the language acquisition process of all children in the world follows a natural schedule that occurs along with the child's maturation process. This is further reinforced by the opinion of Fazal Mohamed Mohamed Sultan (2010) who states that

the lexicon is a smart and economical element. That small lexicon cannot store so many words at once. Thus, the human ability to form an infinite sentence. Therefore, humans must have a finite formula to be stored in the lexicon. The formula then acts to produce an infinite sentence. Therefore, the lexicon needs to have an economic element or formula.

This study shows that five-year-old children have already mastered the types of Malay sentences, which are *ayat penyata*, *ayat tanya*, *ayat seruan*, and *ayat perintah*. The type of sentence that is spoken the most is the *ayat penyara* compared to other types of sentences such as the results of the study shown by past researchers. This situation occurs because, during the five-year-old period, children can most easily master *ayat penyata* in their communication for the purpose of testifying about something or conveying its meaning (Nik Safiah Karim 2010). Based on cognitive development, children at this age are more likely to express something based on what they see through their senses and then ask about something directly. This situation can also be further confirmed by the opinion of Steinberg (1995) who states that at the kindergarten level which is around five years old, children can already master the full level of grammar. Therefore, it is not surprising if the five-year-old child can produce Malay sentences, especially in the aspect of *ayat penyata* and *ayat tanya* more easily compared to mastering *ayat seruan* and *ayat perintah.*

Although these five-year-old children can master *ayat perintah*, the number is not that many when compared to other sentences. This is so because a *ayat perintah* is a sentence to refer to directing something or wanting to request something from another person. This situation can also be displayed in a study conducted by Tay Meng Guat (2006) on the acquisition of Iban as a first language. This is so because it is seen that the subjects of the study use various sentences that change according to the situation and depending on the function to be conveyed. The use of various sentences is in accordance with the function of language as a communication tool for various purposes. In addition, the sentences spoken by the subjects of the study can also be analysed using the characteristics of the sentence patterns of adults who speak Malay.

Children at this age have also mastered a variety of sentence structures and forms. In other words, the constructed sentence is not only a sentence structure that uses the pattern of *frasa nama* + *frasa kerja* (FN+FK) and *frasa nama* + *frasa adjektif* (FN+ FA) only. However, there is also the production of a sentence structure that uses the pattern of *frasa nama* + *frasa kerja* (FN+ FK) frequently.

In this study, research respondents can use or produce sentences based on two more Malay language patterns, which are sentence patterns structured with *rasa nama* + *frasa nama* (FN + FN) and structured *rasa nama* + *frasa sendi nama* (FN + FSN). This is in line with the number of basic Malay sentence patterns which can be divided into four types based on the types of elements that are present as constituents of those sentences, namely the types of subjects and predicates. The subject constituents in all sentences are generally filled with noun phrases, while the predicate constituents are filled with four different elements, namely *frasa nama*, *frasa kerja*, *frasa sendi nama* and *frasa adjektif*.

This study also shows that the study respondents have started to be able to produce *ayat majmuk*. The study respondents were able to produce *ayat majmuk* even though the number was few and not as much and as often as the production of *ayat dasar*. According to Steinberg (1995), the production of compound and complex sentences is the last level or stage of the development of mastery. In addition, the difference between this study and the study done by him is also related to the amount of involvement of the study subjects and the study area. This study only focuses on one

student and one kindergarten only compared to the study conducted by him using a large number of students and different kindergarten areas, namely kindergartens in urban areas and rural areas as the subject of his study. In the researcher's view, this situation has contributed to the incompleteness and instability in acquiring his research data because it has involved socioeconomic elements.

Therefore, based on the results of the study, it can be proven that children's language acquisition is in line with the expected chronological age of 41-46 months. However, sometimes this aspect can go beyond the age expectations because it goes along with the development of the child's current life and it is a natural process, for example in the production of the *ayat majmuk* form. The researcher suggests that more research be done by future researchers on this aspect of children's language acquisition regardless of whether it is in the form of standard Malay or other Malay dialects considering that this aspect is one of the breakdowns of Malay linguistic studies.

Finally, the findings of the study were found to support the opinion of the Mentalist Thoery (1972) which says that the development of a child's language mastery is influenced by the presence of a tool in the mind from birth or naturally. This coincides with the Mentalist Theory which describes the existence of a tool known as the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) in children.

Conclusion

Based on the data presented and explained in detail, it can be shown that five-year-old Malay children most often use *ayat penyata*, followed by *ayat tanya*, *ayat seruan*, and *ayat perintah*. Meanwhile, in terms of sentence construction, these children more often construct *ayat dasar* than *ayat majmuk.* Meanwhile, the Mean Length of Utterance (MLU) of this child is 4.40. This means that these children are included in Final Stage V in Brown's Stages of Development with an MLU of 4.40. This study shows that LAD is very important in the syntactic acquisition process of children.

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