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An experimental exposure of an eight-year old to Tagalog

Maria Pilar Morrision

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By

Maria Pilar Morrison

NORTH'ERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

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By

Maria Pilar Morrison

DeKalb, Illinois

Student name: __Maria Morrison_____

Approved by: _____M. Irene Stephens, PhD_____

Department of: _____Comm. Disorders_____

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ABSTRACT

Language acquisition is a complex process that typically developing children seem to accomplish naturally at an early age. From the babbling of an infant to the multi-syllabic utterances of a toddler, language development occurs due the child's exposure and interaction to the sounds present in his or her environment.. In an environment when two languages are spoken, a child has the opportunity to acquire two languages.

In a case study conducted, an experimental exposure of an eight-year old male to the Tagalog language occurred. During a five-month period, the subject was taught vocabulary words of the Tagalog language and was provided poems and reading materials to supplement his exposure to the language. Results of the study demonstrated similarities and differences in the subject's attempt to acquire a second language. Errors in language acquisition of the primary language parallel errors viewed in the subject's introduction to the Tagalog language. In addition, a brief overview of the Tagalog language is included to provide the reader a better comparison of the phonology of the two languages.

Even at an early age, children attempt to communicate to others in many different ways. Some children use gestures to convey their feelings and ideas to people around them. In addition to this method, children could also use their voice to express their intent to others. The development of language occurs when a child begins to place the pieces of the puzzle around him and pay attention to . his environment. . However, in order for the child to acquire language, there must be several cognitive factors present such as the ability to represent objects. and events and the ability to formulate concepts and strategies (Owens, p. 52). The child begins language development by imitating the motor behaviors of others. In time, the child will be able to use these imitative patterns to form single-word utterances. Language development is complex process that seems to be uncomplicated once a child begins to communicate freely with others. Fortunately, most children develop language typically by being able to imitate the modeling of their parents or relatives and acquire the sounds in their environment. .

Introduction to Bilingualism

With complexity of acquiring one language during childhood, the exposure of a child to another language is an issue bilingual parents often ponder. Since children learn to imitate the sounds in their environment, bilingual parents are able model their native language and the English language to the child. However, some parents are unable to maintain the equal amount of bilingual exposure to the child once he enters an English speaking school.. The

increased demand for the child to speak and learn English becomes greater once he interacts with his peers and teachers in school Unless the balance is maintained at home, the child typically beginsusing English more often than the parents' native language. Eventually, English becomes the child's primary language and the acquisition of another language fails. This scenario parallels the child chosen for the case study of second language exposure.

There are two methods for the acquisition of two languages. A child could acquire a second language either simultaneously or successively. Simultaneous acquisition is the development of two languages prior to age three (McLaughlin, 1978 cited in Owens, p. 419). Some of the characteristics of simultaneous acquisition include language mixing, avoidance of difficult words in the weaker language, shifts in the dominance of either language as directed by environmental shifts, and separation of phonological and grammatical systems. In this method of acquisition, the child acquires both languages in similar fashion as a child acquiring only one language.

In simultaneous acquisition, researchers determined three stages that occur. During the first stage, the child develops two different language systems that a child uses during various contexts. For instance, a child could use one system with an adult of one language, while utilizing another system with an adult of a different language. In addition, the child begins to differentiate the phonological systems of both languages and begin the contrasting and comparing of each system (Owens, p. 420). Within the second stage, the child

applies the same syntactic rules to two different lexicons. During this stage, the child must be able to distinguish a word from its context and connect it with the other word in the other language. This process is often difficult and gradual. In the third stage, the child is able to produce syntactic and lexical structures of each language. Mixing commonly occur if the child lacks the correct word in one language or if the child received mixed adult input. However, the child becomes familiar with the syntactical difference and can manage two separate language languages (Owens, p. 420).

In successive acquisition,, the child develops one language at home while the development of a second language occurs with peer or school interaction typically after the after the age of three. With the exposure of a second language at an early age, the child may be able to use skills learned at school to assist in the faster learning of the second language. Similarly to simultaneous acquisition, successive acquisition also follows three stages. The fist stage in successive acquisition, the child interacts with speakers of the second language. Child associates what is being said to the situation occurring. In this stage, the child tries to assimilate with the speakers of the second language and try to "fit in" with the conversation at hand. During the second stage, the child attempts to communicate with the speakers utilizing words he is able to produce and understand. Lastly, the child begins focusing on correct language structures in the third stage. He applies general knowledge of language to the second

language. The phonological development is the same pattern in first and second languages. Eventually the two systems become separate (Owens, p. 421).

Tagalog Language

Within the American society, there are different languages that children could be exposed to other than the English language. Languages such as Spanish, French, and German are languages optional for children to take in school. However, in this case study, the subject was exposed to an Asian language, *Tagalog.* Individuals that have an Asian language as their first language typically have a language difference when learning General American English (GAE) as their second language. These generalizations are referred to as Asian English (AE). For instance, the phonemic contrast between Asian English (AE) and General American English is prevalent in the final positions of words (Owens, p. 416). The GAE phonemes of / p, s, z, t, 1,4)'), ~,e,~}~~/ are omitted in the final position of Asian English. In addition, the contrasts between GAE and AE are also apparent in grammatical structures. Some examples of grammatical contrasts involve the marking of the plural-so In AE, speakers commonly do not mark for the plural -s in numerical adjectives such as *three pot.* However, AE speakers mark for the irregular plural adjectives such as *five deers.* Another grammatical structure contrast is the past tense marking of -ed. With AE speakers, the -ed marking is either omitted, over generalized, or marked twice. With omission, an AE speaker would typically say I *cook last night.* In overgeneralization, the speakers would say I *goed there.* Finally, double marking

is demonstrated as *I didn't ate*. Since Asia contains numerous languages and dialects, the generalizations of Asian English may not apply to all individuals that have an Asian language as their primary language.

In an attempt to understand the similarities and differences of the acquisition of a second language by an English speaker, an English-speaking child was exposed to an Asian language, *Tagalog*. The child was taught vocabulary words and provided reading materials of the Tagalog language in intermittent period of five months.

Background Information

The subject for this case study is an eight-year-old male who will be referred to as "Drew." Drew was born in Illinois to Filipino parents. Both of his parents were born and raised in the Philippine islands. In addition, Drew's parents speak the national language of the Philippines, *Tagalog,* fluently. Drew's parents attempted to teach him both English and their native language when he first learned to speak. According to his mother, Drew was able to speak Tagalog when he was very young. However, when he began attending elementary school, Drew began using English more often. As a result, his use of the Tagalog language decreased. Although his parents encouraged him to use Tagalog at home while conversing with his parents and siblings, the tactic did not assist him in acquiring the language. At eight years of age, Drew predominantly uses English to communicate with his family and friends.

Standardized Tests.

In order to be exposed to the Tagalog language, Drew must first be established as a typically developing child. Various tests were administered to Drew to determine his language development level. The following tests were administered to the subject: the Stephens Oral Language Screening Task (SOlSl), the Expression Connection, and Subtest I and IT of the Test of Language Development- Intermediate (TOLD-I:3).

The Stephens Oral Language Screening Task is a test to determine if the child could pronounce the target sounds. These sounds are placed in a sentence format. The child is instructed to repeat the sentence after the clinician correctly states the sentence (Stephens, 1977). For example, to target the $Iv I$ sound, the clinician will say "It's not for me, but I would like to look at it."

Results of the SOLST test indicated that Drew was able correctly pronounce all the target sounds, such as $If,$ r, $k/.$ In addition, , the results also indicated that these sounds are present in his English phonological system.

The Expression Connection was designed to test a child's ability to sequence ideas through effective storytelling. The test has various levels, which assist in determining the language development level of the child (Aker & Brueggeman, 1991). According to the Expression Connection, a typically developing child ages six through nine should function at or above Level 3, while typically developing children ages nine through twelve should function at LevelS.

Results of the Expression Connection test indicated that Drew was able to function at a Level 4.

The Test of Language Development-Intermediate is also a test designed to examine the level of a child's language development. The TOLD-I test has five different subtests (Hammill & Newcomer, 1997). Drew was administered subtest I and subtest IT. Subtest IT includes items, which target the child's ability to combine sentences. For example, a test item could involve the following format: "Ann has a dog. Mark has a dog." Combine the sentences. "Ann and Mark have dogs." Subtest IT involves pictures of animals or objects. The child is provided characteristics of the animals or objects in a phrase format. For instance, a picture of a monkey will have a descriptor of "tree swinger."

The results of the Subtest I and IT of the TOLD-I test indicate that Drew was a typically developing child. Drew was able to combine sentences using conjunctions in Subtest I and was also able to identify the correct picture with the descriptors provided in Subtest IT. The results of these tests establish that Drew is a typically developing eight-year old.

Tagalog Measurements

To determine Drew's level of understanding of the Tagalog language, a pre-measure of the Filipino language was given verbally. The pre-measure contains five conversational type questions in Tagalog. To a fluent speaker of Tagalog, the answers to these questions could be elaborated on. However, to an individual beginning to learn the language, a couple of words could express the

answer to the question. The pre-measure test indicated that Drew's

communicating level was of an individual beginning to learn the language. His

answers were typically one to two words. In addition, the answers also

indicated he was unable to conjugate or mark for tenses.

Phonological Differences

To better understand the differences in Drew's answers in the pre-

measure test, a brief overview of the Tagalog language must be discussed.

Although the Tagalog language is generally considered as having a simple

phonological system, reduplication and borrowing from different languages

have complicated the language. The language has four basic syllable types: CV,

V, CVC, and VC (French, p. 1). However, with these basic syllable types,

numerous syllable shapes are formed to incorporate the Tagalog vocabulary.

Contrary to the General American English vowel quadrilateral, the Tagalog

language only incorporates five basic vowels /a, e, i, o, u], However, the

Tagalog language does include diphthongs in their phonological system.

Diphthongs in the Tagalog language are as follows: *lay/ /ey/ loy/ law/ low/*

liw/ lui/ Iii (French, p. 15).

The consonants of the Tagalog language are very similar to GAE. It also

contains stops, nasals, fricatives, liquids, and glides. However, one difference is

the positions of the some of the consonants. Unlike the English phonology, the

Tagalog language allows glottal stops in initial position.

With the exception of a few structural differences, the Tagalog language follows similar grammatical structure as the English language. For instance, in GAE, the sentence *I will work* also follows the same grammatical structure in Tagalog, *Aka ay magtatrabahoh.* Due to the similarity of the two languages, the subject may be able to generalize what he has learned in his first language to facilitate a faster acquisition of the second language.

Case Study Results

During the five-month period, a few errors were observed in Drew's learning of the Tagalog language that was similar to the errors made by a child learning English as a second language. The errors observed were overgeneralizations, omissions, and additions. Overgeneralization occurs when a child applies a phonological rule without differentiating from exceptions. For instance, the noun deer is used to describe one deer or a number of deer without the plural marking of -so This error was observed noted when Drew was beginning to learn different vocabulary words. For instance, the word dog in Tagalog does not need the plural marking of -s to indicate multiple dogs. However, Drew marked the word with an -smarking. Instead of *aso,* Drew indicated the described multiple dogs as *asos.* This demonstrated overgeneralization because Drew assumed that since dog in English was marked for plurality, the Tagalog word for dog must also be marked. Other errors demonstrated by Drew were omissions and additions. However, it was later

observed that these occurred due to failure of understanding the vocabulary words presented.

While Drew was learning the Tagalog language, observations about the language interaction were detected. Since Drew was encouraged to talk to his parents in Tagalog, they observed him code switching. Code switching is defined as the shifting of one language to another especially when the speakers use both languages (Owens, p. 423). Drew's code-switching style, however, may be due to inability to find the correct Tagalog vocabulary word, which led to his use of the Englishword. For instance, Drew stated "hindi fair" because he was unable to find the equivalent of "fair" in his Tagalog vocabulary. However, he use the Tagalog equivalent "hindi" to state the word "no".

Another language interaction observed generalization. Drew would tend to generalize the Tagalog verbs and nouns. Similar to his overgeneralization error, Drew would mark or not mark for plurality. At times, he becomes confused at which verb and nouns are marked with the plural-so This confusion is due to the Tagalog structure of having a word as the marker for plurality. In other words, instead of utilizing the -s marker, plurality is indicated by number. For instance, in the phrase "two dogs" the Tagalog equivalent is "dalawang aso". (Dalawa is two, -ng is a suffix, aso is dog)

Discussion

After the five-month period, Drew was administered the same five questions verbally. The responses to these questions show a higher level of

understanding of the Tagalog language. His responses were similar to responses that were expected of speakers beginning to learn the language. Even though Drew continue to function in the beginning stages of learning the Tagalog language, he has improved his pronunciations of the Tagalog words. In addition, his speaking rate when reading Tagalog text has also increased. Moreover, his view about learning the language has changed because his motivation to learn it has improved.

As a result of the brief exposure to his native language, Drew's errors suggested that interaction between two languages could help facilitate or hinder the learning of a second language. His overgeneralization error confused him to a point that it was difficult for him to determine how to mark nouns and verbs. However, his errors in omission and addition allowed him to learn the correct terms of the language. Although language acquisition is a difficult and complex process, an individual could overcome these obstacles and strive to learn another language with perseverance and dedication.

Pre and Post Measure Tests

Subject: 8 years old
Randomly Given

Pre-set questions

English:	What is your name?
Tagalog:	Ano ang pangalan mo?
	/'tano ?a~pajolan *mo*l
Subject response:	*An panalan ko ay Marc Banauia.*
	l?*dn* pana (an k̥o ray marK: bcH'IQ:W(J l
Possible response:	Ang pangalan ko ay Marc Banawa'.
	(C'Qr:J pClJ6\(lf). ~?*ax* rrorK-boffiW ɟ
English:	How old are you now?
Tagalog:	Han taon ka na ba?
	(((Ian +aon K̥ono, m/
Subject response:	*Walo.*
	/WOJo/
Possible response:	Ako ay walong taon na.
	/?o.kzO70,,i wo.10,+a6n r\Ck /
English:	What grade are you in school?
Tagalog:	Ano ang bay tang mo sa escuela?
	/?ano?Q.r"j₁ myte.) rro so e:;,'KweIQ!
Subject response:	*Dalawa.* /' l
	/do.JawD..
Possible response:	Pangalawang bay tang na ako sa escuela.
	/pa,ylQvJOJ baytUJ noXak̥o̵ SQ *eSK.~la.*1

English:	Can you count up to ten? Can you show me?
Tagalog:	Pwede bang magbilang ka hangat sa sampu? /

!plJ;widfL   bC⋟)₁Y1000bHa~   ha~+   sᴏ salYlpu /

/po. K(tᴏ o"ᴏ ty sᴏ (O\(h (

Pakita mo nga sa akin?

Subject response:	*Isa, dalawa, talo, apat, lima, anim, pito, walo, sayam, sapu.*

/(I~   dalo.\l\Xlto. '('\o ?ᴏ~{ ιι'mō Caoĺm
p(1-D wo ?lo sayo.ꞏf1ı so. ?~U/

Possible response:	Isa, dalawa, tatlo, apat, lima, anim, pito, walo, siyam, sampu.

/~Sᴏ.da.\awa -to.ꞏ-\'?\O 70\Xl+   hM̄Q ((1O\1́Y)

P\-tD wo.7\o ~(~a.m ":≫nmpu /

Tagalog Vowels and Diphthongs

Vowels		Articulator Position
Iii		[+ hi, - bk]
Iui		[+ hi, + bk]
lei		[- hi, -10]
101		[- hi, + bk]
lal		[+10, - bk]

English Diphthongs			Tagalog Diphthongs
layl in kite		-7	*layl*
leYI in hate		-7	*leyl*
loYI inboy		-7	*loyl*
lawl in cow		-7	*I owl*
lowl in boat		-7	*I owl*
liwl in few		-7	*lui*
liYI in beat		-7	*Iii*

Tagalog Phonemic Segments

Tagalog Consonants

		Labial	Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops	VL	P		t	č	k	?
	VD	b		d	ǰ	g	
Nasals		m		n			
Fricatives	VL	(f)	(θ)	s	(~)		h
	VD	(v)	(ð)	(z)	(ž)		
Lateral					l		
Liquid Flap					r		
Semi-Vowels		w			y		

Tagalog Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
High	i		u
Mid	e		o
Low		a	

T♦.•

Stephens Oral Language Screening ,...,SOLST)

Name _____

Test For,," ·

E:«aminer _____— — — — — _.__ — — — — —

O'te _____._____—

Group _____

OIREeTIONS: We're going to playa talking game. You say just what I say. Let 5 practice-

   (1) "Hello." (Hello.)
   (2) "I'm fine; thank you." (I m fine, thank you.)
   (3) "Is it raining?" (Is it raining?)

Geod, let's go en.

   If the child says (Me. too) to practice item *(2).01* answers the question in practice item (3). say "Whoops. I caught you. i.member_ to say exactly what I say", and repeat the practice item. If the child continues to answer the question, try "New you ask me". Get the correct. response before proceeding. If possible.

_____		*If i*	1. Robatt found 8jhiny penny.
_____		*;f I*	2. He wants to wash himself.
_____	*f3`*	*;,1*	3. Someone burned a hote in the.!..ug.
_____		*I(}I*	4. Why d~dn·t.!!!eytelt another story?
_____		*tv!*	5. She put the co~er on the JSI)!.elY tightly.
_____		*tz!*	6. There:!, no rea,!on for fighting with him.
_____		*If I*	7. Is Ralph playing a di.!!.elent game?
_____	*le"/*	*/I'*	8. Afte·r Jack fixed my bikel!.ode I!!..0und a lot.
_____		*IkI'*	9. My aunt who fell.£!in't wa~
_____		*IsI*	10. Let him go to the1.tore because we need,.!orne milk.
_____		*Itf I*	11. Where will they sing for the..£nildren?
_____		*ItlI*	12. If you eat too mu.£t! candy, you'll be sick.
_____		*(HI*	13. We thought the baby could *say* !!!ank you.
_____		*Idjl*	14.108 should have bought three olan~es.
_____		*/1/*	15. It's not for me but I wouldj!ke to look at it.

eliP'lieal Comments:

G_.~ lli ~~D.tllilliB~·~[k
•~ .~ L:J ‖:J .~. ~ .~. ~ ~ L:J ~ 12!J|

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Syntax Scor. _____

Artie. Score _____

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