

**MODIFIED CHILD-DIRECTED SPEECH (MCDS) AND
THE USE OF A NAMING TASK TO COMPARE
THE PACING OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND
VOCABULARY BUILDING OF AGE 2-6 LEARNERS OF THE FIRST AND
SECOND LANGUAGES**

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Abstract

As support to several studies about Child-Directed Speech (CDS), also known as *motherese* or *parentese*, this study compared the pacing of three children learning their first and second languages (Filipino and English) and explored the language learning of children exposed to a specialized language task specific to the vocabulary building and facilitated through a style derived from CDS while listening to the oral drills and language reviews done by the mother and the other siblings at home. The respondents were of different ages (i.e. 2, 4, and 6 years old) and varied in terms of language input and output due to differences in exposure and environment (i.e. schooling and non-schooling). Furthermore, the study used a specially-designed framework explaining the totality of the process, actions taken to address difficulties, and corrected output or acquired vocabulary through interaction and exposure. Exposure to language input was tested in the assessment phase. The study also tested the ability of the youngest child not yet studying in a formal school, unlike his siblings, to absorb language input, still, with constant exposure (in the corrective phase) leading to success in correction of difficulties and acquisition of language input.

Keywords: Modified Child Directed Speech, exposure, uncorrected output, corrected output

**MODIFIED CHILD-DIRECTED SPEECH (MCDS) DAN
PENGUNAAN TUGAS PENAMAAN UNTUK MEMBANDINGKAN
KECEPATAN PEMEROLEHAN BAHASA DAN
PENGEMBANGAN KOSAKATA PEMBELAJAR BAHASA PERTAMA DAN
KEDUA USIA 2-6 TAHUN**

Abstrak

Untuk mendukung beberapa penelitian tentang *Child-Directed Speech* (CDS), juga dikenal sebagai bahasa ibu atau orang tua, penelitian ini membandingkan kecepatan tiga anak yang mempelajari bahasa pertama dan kedua (bahasa Filipina dan Inggris) dan mengeksplorasi pembelajaran bahasa anak-anak yang dipajankan pada tugas kebahasaan khusus terutama untuk mengembangkan kosakata dan difasilitasi melalui gaya yang berasal dari CDS sambil mendengarkan latihan lisan dan penjelasan yang dilakukan oleh ibu dan saudara lainnya di rumah. Responden

berbeda usia (yaitu 2, 4, dan 6 tahun) dan bervariasi dalam hal input dan output bahasa karena perbedaan dalam pajanan dan lingkungan (yaitu sekolah dan non-sekolah). Selanjutnya, penelitian ini menggunakan kerangka yang dirancang khusus yang menjelaskan totalitas proses, tindakan yang diambil untuk mengatasi kesulitan, dan mengoreksi luaran atau memperoleh kosakata melalui interaksi dan pajanan. Pajanan masukan bahasa diuji dalam fase penilaian. Penelitian ini juga menguji kemampuan anak bungsu yang belum belajar di sekolah formal, tidak seperti saudara kandungnya, untuk menyerap input bahasadengan pajanan yang terus menerus (dalam fase korektif) yang mengarah pada keberhasilan dalam koreksi kesulitan dan perolehan input bahasa.

Kata kunci: *Modified Child-Directed Speech*, pajanan, luaran tidak terkoreksi, luaran terkoreksi

INTRODUCTION

Children learn from their care givers and the environment where they are exposed to. Learning a language, specifically, is experienced through influences of different external factors. In the past, several language experts coined a particular term which will discuss such phenomenon of language acquisition, where care giver or other interlocutors are involved in the process of acquisition: Child Directed Speech or CDS. According to Newman and Sachs (2013, 2009, 2005, 2001, 1997), CDS is defined as the way of the child to learn a language by being exposed to a specialized manner of speaking by the care giver or, usually, the mother. This paper will explore a modified version of the CDS which is coined in this paper as Modified Child Directed Speech (MCDS).

MCDS is defined, theoretically, as the inclusion of a language task which is specific to the vocabulary building of the learner and is facilitated through a style derived from the CDS. A vocabulary task (i.e. naming task) adopting a principle of the game, *Cranium Cariboo*, was used

to see how can the three respondents name different words associated to the words' images. This study may theorize a particular concept, but also supports the previous notions of CDS and vocabulary aptitude in terms of age, exposure to the language(s), and other factors which can be connected to language acquisition.

Technically, a task-based CDS can be thought of on understanding the concept of modified CDS because it involves a specific task (i.e. naming) that uses the features of mothers or parentese. In reading, there will be two phases that will be discussed: the assessment phase and the corrective phase. As the paper progresses, it will show how the focus shifts from all the three children to the youngest which manifested the difficulties that a young learner can really experience upon exposure to several languages (i.e. Filipino (Southern Luzon Tagalog variety) and English).

The main goal of this research is to support Child Directed Speech and to know its potentials for child language acquisition (i.e. vocabulary building)

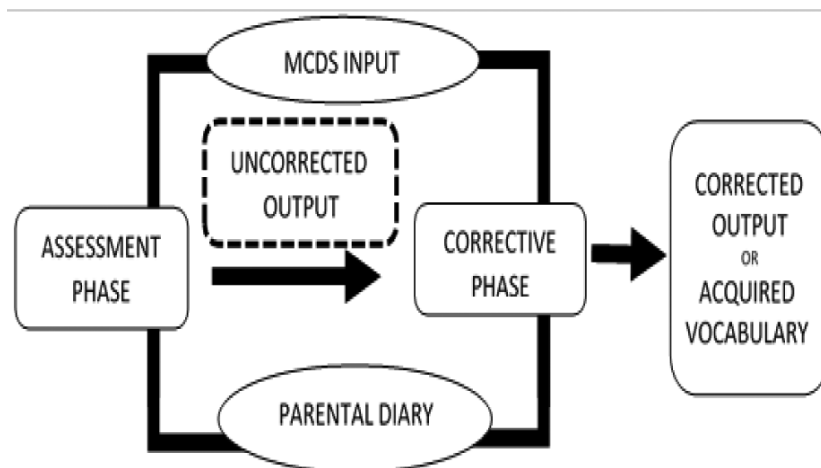


Figure 1. Modified Child Directed Speech Framework

and answer the following research questions: (a) Is indirect teaching of words useful in teaching a child the words themselves?; (b) What could be the effects of Modified Child Directed Speech to the youngest learner in naming words and building vocabulary?; (c) What contributions can the progress of the elder siblings do in improving the L1/L2 of the involved learners?; and (d) To what extent can a care giver or the mother herself be of help to the L1 and L2 learning of her children?

Moreover, it will extend the discussions and analyses on the different aspects of child language acquisition (e.g. exposure and interlocutors). Lastly, it will explore a productive perspective on vocabulary correction and production to achieve successful language acquisition. In this portion, several findings from cross-researches were made as justification of the data that this study had gathered. Focus on CDS, role of the parent or care giver, role of exposure, and, in turn, success in language acquisition prepares the readers in the discussion and analysis of this paper.

Child Directed Speech is one of the key concepts of child language acquisition. It serves as the medium or style of the care giver or interlocutor to talk to the infant or children. It has a unique style for vocalization and prosody. Since it is called Child Directed Speech, it is highly centered to the child's way of speaking which is more familiar to the child himself or herself. CDS is looked upon as a conversational tool of parents to talk to their child and for the latter to unconsciously learn significant vocabulary from the utterances they produce. CDS, however, can be viewed as a specific strategy for vocabulary teaching and learning. The idea of modification in this paper extends the potentials of CDS which can be used in specific ways (i.e. teaching vocabulary) and indirect ways (i.e. indirect to direct perception of input). As mentioned by Stoll (2009), "children may not be addressed directly until they start to produce intelligible words (e.g. Quiche Mayan: Ratner & Pye 1984, Kaluli: Schieffelin 1985), "which proves the indirect tuning aspect

of this research. He added from his analysis of the usage-based theory of language acquisition that other features also vary, such as number of words or vocabulary a child could perceive and produce at the end of the day.

In an article written by Fernald (1985), four-month old infants prefer to listen to motherese. This behavior of infants continues until the child reaches adolescents stage. A certain soothing and caring effect helps the child establish a good rapport to his or her mother. Research on the dyadic interaction between mothers and their children has proven efficiency in the findings of Bavin (2009). Although it focused on cultures which are highly dependent on mothers in talking to the children, still it shows how important the parents' role is, specifically the mother, in honing the child's language abilities.

As mentioned by Lust (2006), mere exposure is sufficient for growth and change. The ability of the child to fast map serves as the coping mechanism which helps the child learn the target vocabulary or language. Many linguists and scientists believe that exposure to an experience gives more knowledge about it, boost curiosity, and motivation. Furthermore, in the article by Lust, she mentioned the findings by Cromer (1987) that "experience stimulates language organizational processes and that these affect other linguistic structures that are internally related." These findings confirm the role of exposure in learning or acquiring a certain language. Environment may play a vital role in the exposure because whatever is available in the environment will be very much significant in the child's knowledge and, even, language.

In the third level of variability of grammars, time of acquisition is one essential factor. According to Tarone (2007), "The earliest learned forms are deepest and most automatic, and forms learned later require more attention and control." Thus, success in language acquisition can be achieved upon early exposure and correction of whatever linguistic feature needed to be corrected. Success is highly dependent on the environment, experience, and interlocutors of the child. Also, in the last stage of the five stages of language acquisition (Gass, 1988), output is preceded by apprehensive input (e.g. utterances from interlocutors, environment, exposure, and prior knowledge), comprehended input, intake, and integration. The output might be hard to produce since it passes through a very complex process, yet success of corrected output is still possible because of the presence of meaning full utterances with a specific goal oriented (i.e. vocabulary building).

METHOD

In this study, three respondents were chosen based on proximity to the researcher and the socio-economic status. There are reasons why the researcher chose such respondents is to naturally get data which come from learners who only rely their vocabulary from the average vocabulary of their parents and the school where they are enrolled in. Also, their difference in age is necessary to compare the pace of each learner in terms of language acquisition. They are siblings of different ages (i.e. 2, 4, and 6 years old) and vary in terms of language input and output due to differences in exposure and environment

(i.e. schooling and non- schooling). The researcher used a naming strategy which is derived from a game called Cranium Cariboo (Cranium Incorporated, 1998) which is a board game intended for young children to help them name letters, numbers, colors and shapes. It has been published by Cranium, Inc. in 1998. However, the original game will not be utilized, only the concept about naming and identifying pictures will be adopted.

In the data gathering, the help of the mother in performing the task of naming contributed in the progress of the study. The researcher, at first, briefed the mother about the parental diary that the latter will do. Fortunately, the mother was cooperative and willing to do the task during free hours at home. In this case, the environment will be more natural and conducive for the learners instead of there searcher being the one who will serve as interlocutor or care giver.

The researcher designed a data gathering material which was used in the process. Derived from the original cariboo game, the mother or the care giver showed the pictures to the three children and let the latter listen and repeat the words that the former will say. This should be continuous. She spent three minutes per row, without showing the other rows until the children were able to name the pictures in one row. This process continued until all pictures were named. When the pictures were named, the mother asked each child to name, on his/her own, the words' pictures that they have seen. Easy at first glance, but the mother took an hour every day to accomplish the task and, eventually, exposure

sessions. Note that the way the mother guided or read a loud the words in this task was the MCDS way: high pitch, child-like talk, but the content revolves around the expected words that should be learned by the children. Also, this is modified in away that the mother did not directly involve the youngest child in the naming task. There a son behind such way is for the researcher to see the difference between Direct CDS, the usual way, or the modified way which is indirect involvement of the youngest learner.

Reports from the mother showed how, in the process, the youngest sibling became curious about the task of his two elder siblings and eventually voluntarily tuning in to the naming activity done by his mother and the two other children. Interestingly, after two sessions, the two elder siblings got tired and bored of the task, yet the youngest was the one being enticed and wanted to pushed through even though his brother and sister did not like to continue any more. According to the Student Coalition for Action on Literacy Education (SCALE) (2014), the children have the typical attention span which is equal to the age of the child plus 1. For example, if the child is 2 years old (age of the child) plus 1, the attention span of the child is 3 minutes. A side from this, the same pictures will be too usual for both of the school-age children and the non- school-age child, yet we will see if, by constant exposure or frequency of use (Hohle in Bavin, 2009), children will learn the language, especially the youngest. All of these behaviors were seen through the gathering and were explored through a two- phase elaboration: the assessment and corrective phase.

DISCUSSION

Language acquisition is an essential aspect of human existence, it is our way to communicate and interact with other people. Early years of such phenomenon indicate the significance of developing a medium which can be used to be an effective member of the society. Vocabulary building is a natural process of language acquisition. It is evident across ages.

Figure 2 shows the word/s named by the respondents. Respondent 1 is the eldest (6 years old), Respondent 2 (4 years old), and Respondent 3 (2 years old). The naming did not stop in just naming perse, it involves retention and review. The first four sessions were the stage in the assessment phase where in the respondents were tasked to name four words per session. The two eldest (6 years and 4 years) almost got perfect scores all through out the sessions. The significant figure from the table was the scores of the youngest respondent (2 years old). Sessions 5-9 were the sessions; the difficulty was observed (uncorrected output). Puno (tree) was named as Bundok (mountain) by the youngest. He had difficulties in distinguishing the features of a mountain and a tree. To address such difficulty, the corrective phase was put into execution. Sessions 10-22 were the stages in the corrective phase. In this phase, a different set of pictures (real-life pictures) was shown to the respondents. Respondent 1 and Respondent 2 were able to still name the pictures correctly, yet the youngest (Respondent 3) still had difficulty in naming puno (tree).

This phenomenon leads to the intervention in this study. There searcher provided a separate naming

task (see Appendix C.2 Corrective Phase Material) where the focus words are puno (tree) and bundok (mountain) to help the youngest respondent who was having difficulty in distinguishing the two to correct such problem. Sessions 19-22, in particular, were the sessions from which the correction had become successful. In such sessions, the parent wrote in the parental diary the following observations:

Session 19: “Kaya na niyang (Respondent 3) ma-identify [‘yung] pangalawang drawing ng puno. [‘Yung] dalawang drawing ‘di paniya ma-identify at [‘yung] unang drawing ng bundok na-identify din.”

(He was able to identify the second image of a tree, but the other two image soft he tree, he cannot identify yet. However, he was able to identify the first image of the mountain.)

Session 20: “Na-identify na ni Giovanni (Respondent 3) ang 3 drawing ng puno, [‘yung] 2 last na drawing ng bundok na [lang] siya nalilito. ‘Dipaniyamasabikung ano [‘yung] nakadrawing.”

(Giovanni (Respondent 3) was able to name the 3 images of the tree. The only difficulty he is experiencing is naming the last 2 images of the mountain. He cannot name yet what the image is.)

Session 21: “Nasasabi nani Giovanni (Respondent 3) kung ano ang bundok at puno. Nasabi na niya ng tama [‘yung] 6 anakadrawing.”

(Giovanni (Respondent 3) can already name or distinguish a mountain from a tree. He already correctly named the 6 images.)

Session 22: “Kaya [nang] ma-identify ni Giovanni (Respondent 3)

[ang] pagkakaiba ng bundokatpuno. Pinakitaankosiyang ibang drawing galingsabook, alamnaniyaangtawag sapunoatbundok.”

(Giovanni (Respondent 3) can already distinguish the difference of a mountain from a tree. I also showed him drawings from otherbooks and he was able to name a tree and a mountain correctly.)

The success of the last sessions confirms the ability of constant exposure and MCDS to be helpful in vocabulary building and/or correction.

Although the same data, Figure 3 shows the increase of vocabulary and success rate of utterance. The phases where in Respondent 3 did not intersect with the other two respondents are the assessment and corrective phases where he was still being corrected. In sessions 19-22, all of the respondents are already on the same line that indicates their success in naming the words from the materials given.

Using the points from the literature review, the data was analyzed using the several paradigms presented from various findings across researches and claims in child language acquisition.

Child Directed Speech to Modified-Child Directed Speech

Since this paper proposes a possible strategy that modifies Child Directed Speech, MCDS used in this study was very much effective. The features of MCDS being learner-centered and some how task-based enables the difficulties of the identified respondent to be addressed. Consequently, the MCDS way proves the importance of a special prosody that helps children learn a language, if not vocabulary. Since

the parent was instructed to use such strategy in talking to the respondents, her children's, ease in learning was seen. In the frame work that was used in the study (see Fig. 1), MCDS was helpful not only in the assessment phase, but also in the corrective phase. The strategy helped in correcting output and delivering in put to the respondents all through out the sessions of exposure. More over, in such a way, CDS can really be used in both direct and indirect teaching of vocabulary. Conversational input was already explored by CDS, yet learning input was explored by MCDS in this study.

Role of the Parent or Care giver

Truly, the claim of Fernald (1985) about children prefer to listen to motherese can be reflected by the behavior of the youngest respondent in the research. The framework includes the parental diary which gave the highest contribution in the success of the study. More over, the parent helped in the execution of the MCDS. As reflection of thema in goal of the study, the MCDS was used as a strategy by the parent in teaching or exposing the respondents with the target word/s. Also, even not a significant point of the claim, the siblings, as reported by the mother used the MCDS way to help their youngest sibling correct the difficulty, which in turn, can be an eye opener to the features of CDS as a flexible strategy in helping a child develop language. Its close access to the child's trust, confidence, and way of speaking really helped in the success of correction and, somehow, vocabulary building.

Role of Exposure

To reiterate the findings by Cromer (1987) as mentioned by Lust (2006), that “experience stimulates language organizational processes and that these affect other linguistic structures that are internally related.” The 22 sessions served as exposure of the respondents to the input. Although a bit tedious, still the effect of exposure to the success of language development, in this paper, vocabulary building was confirmed.

From the framework, exposure’s role in the phases was the MCDS input. Constant exposure of the respondents in the input helped them realize, if not corrected, the difficulties they might have experienced during the course of the study. Furthermore, exposure also helped the respondents develop the skill of listening and tuning to their interlocutor. As reported by the mother, the three respondents really focused on the task. However, as a natural characteristic of children to be impatient if the task is already taking too long, the respondents still showed some signs of boredom specially

during the repetition of the task, which is just normal to their age. Just like what the Student Coalition for Action on Literacy Education (SCALE) (2014) claimed that children have the typical attention span which is equal to the age of the child plus 1.

Success of Language Acquisition

From the framework of Gass (1998), output, being the last stage of the five stages of language acquisition, the success of language acquisition depends on several factors (i.e. exposure, prior knowledge, interlocutors, and environment). In this study, some factors were observed and assumed to be the indicators of the successful correction, if not learning, of the target language or vocabulary. However, due to time constraints, the second language acquisition of the youngest respondent was not thoroughly explored, still the success of correcting the difficulty in the L1 was a breakthrough in the child’s vocabulary formation. Moreover, if such study showed the effectiveness of MCDS to L1, what more can it help

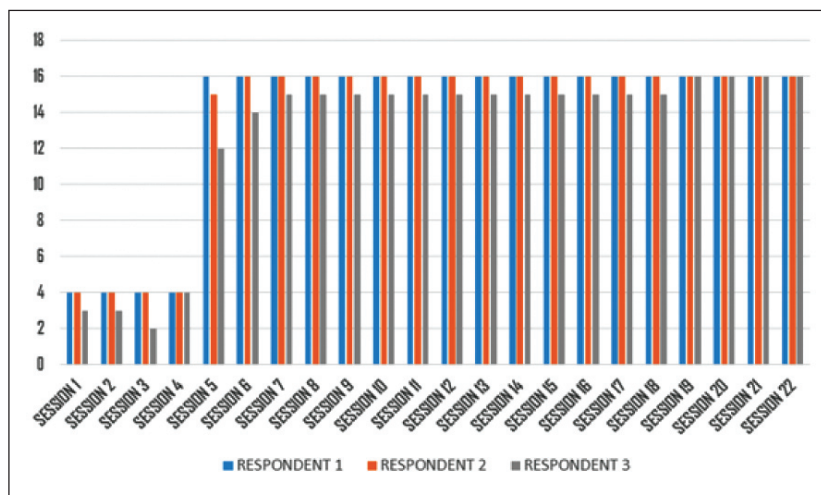


Figure 2. Vocabulary Turn-Out Per Session

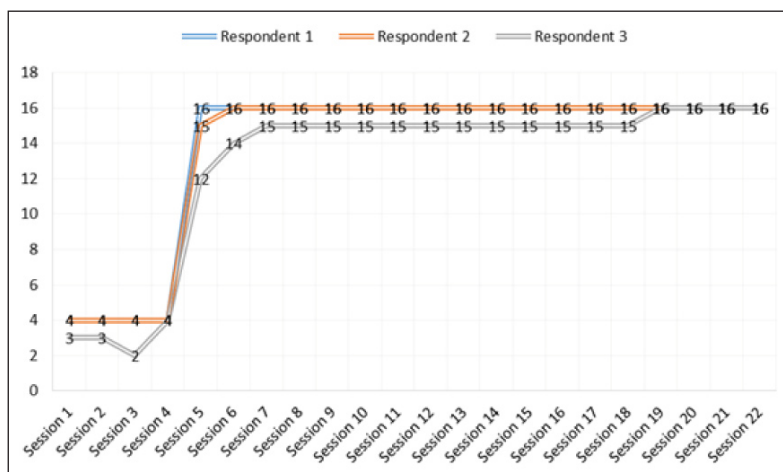


Figure 3. Success Indicator

in Early L2 acquisition? Such basis of the theory may open the potentials of MCDS to be of help to the Early L2 acquisition or Simultaneous and Sequential bilinguals.

Finally, the data and the evidences showed how MCDS can be a potential eye opener to language researchers. This study aims to bravely theorize a new concept which, in turn, can help realize the potentials of CDS and see its possible contributions to the pace of vocabulary learning of children and, eventually, language acquisition.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has successfully supported the earlier findings on language acquisition. Although, the data showed that time to master the language or add more vocabulary is very essential because time dictates the maturity, preparedness, and breadth and depth of prior knowledge. Still, the native language difficulties of the respondent have been corrected in the process.

Thus, the summary of findings and conclusions will answer the research questions derived in the study:

- Is indirect teaching of words useful in teaching a child the words themselves?

Yes, indirect teaching of words is useful in teaching a child words themselves because it helps in the honing of the tuning and listening skills. Also, curiosity is being shown by the child in all the sessions where he was not directly taught where he was not directly taught by his mother. The interlocutors in this scenario helped in boosting the consciousness of the child in terms of naming and learning.

- What could be the effects of Modified Child Directed Speech to the youngest learner in naming words and building vocabulary?

Although difficult at first, the mother identified the weakness of the child in terms of naming words, especially because the youngest learner was not directly focused, Modified CDS helped in identifying the difficulty in naming tree and mountain and

distinguishing the two even with the help of pictures because of its prosodic feature being familiar to the child in focus.

- What contributions can the progress of the elder siblings do in improving the L1/L2 of the involved learners? Because the elder siblings were already knowledge able, they already helped in correcting the youngest. They added into the pool of interlocutors who helped in distinguishing the tree and mountain.
- To what extent can a care giver or the mother her self be of help to the L1 and L2 learning of her children? The mother plays a vital role in helping her children learn the L1 and L2 because she is the first interlocutor or care giver where all the language of the child come from. The mother's diligence in this case study helped in the correction of the child's difficulties. More over, the use of MCDS way in helping the youngest learner correct the target vocabulary words.

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