

CHILDREN SPEAKING SKILL BASED ON THE BIRTH ORDER

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Abstract

Speaking is one of the language skills. It becomes an important means of communication, from which interlocutors can understand the intended meanings. The children speaking skill is influenced by many factors, one of which is the birth order. It describes how a particular child is born from the same mother such as the eldest, the middle, and the youngest child. This will actually shape character and ability of the children. Based on its function, a language is a means of communication used by individuals in their interaction or relationship with others. The speaking ability is not only related to the birth order, but also some other factors such as intelligence. The middle child usually has more speaking skill compared to the eldest and youngest child. He/ she can communicate from different directions, and his/her position gives its benefits. The middle child can develop the speaking skill from parents, older brothers/ sisters, and younger brothers/ sisters. No matter the position of the child is, his/ her speaking ability can optimally be achieved if the parents provide opportunities to communicate and practice based on his/ her needs.

Keywords:

INTRODUCTION

Language is humans' means of communication. Without language, the different perception between a speaker and an interlocutor will occur. Speaking is an individual's ability to convey meaning orally, so that the interlocutor can receive the intended meaning. Speaking ability is a part of language processes - the use of expressive language to produce meanings. The earliest speaking development is mumbling. The children have already recognized the language before they are able to speak actively.

Bromley (1992) mentions four kinds of language skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Language skill is different with speaking ability. Language is a complex and semantic system, meanwhile speaking skill is expression of words. The

language can be either receptive or expressive. For example, a receptive language can be seen from how to listen and read information, and expressive language can be seen from how to write information to convey meanings to the readers.

The significant difference between language and speaking is identified. Language covers both spoken and written communication, gestures, body language, face expression, and pantomime. Meanwhile, speaking is a spoken language mostly used as the most effective way of communication. Language development is always increased related to the child's age development. Parents should always pay attention to this development which affects his/ her learning process. It can be achieved by giving motivation for him/ her to practice.

Speaking skill is the ability to express, explain, and convey ideas, thoughts, ideas, or heart feelings to others using spoken language that can be understood by others. Two activities which can be done by the children are interaction and communication with others in order to train the children speaking skill. The children speaking skill needs to be trained in their early periods so that they can pronounce articulation sounds or words to express, state, and convey ideas, thoughts, opinions, and heart feelings to others. The children can practice how to speak by the help of adults through conversation. From it, they will find experiences and knowledge improvement as well as the language development. The children need reinforcement, reward (present, praise), stimulation, and a good model from the adults for their optimal language development.

Birth order has attracted researchers in general and child development researchers in particular. It contributes to the children's development such as behavior, personality, and development aspects. Most parents give more attention toward the first child related to his/ her childcare behavior. The parents also have higher demands and standards to the first child. This leads to the first child to have a satisfactory academic and professional career. This has become the reason why they have a high sense of guilt, anxiety, and difficulty toward unpleasant situations and they often go medical clinic and child counselor (Santrock, 1983).

Speaking skill is closely related to the birth order. This attracts researchers to conduct studies on investigating how the children's speaking skill is different one another based on the birth order. In general, speaking skill of the second child or the

middle one is higher than the first or the last child. The same pattern of care is supposed to produce the identical speaking skill. The parents' attention is given mostly to the first and last child; however, why those who have better speaking development are the eldest and youngest child.

In general, we have a paradigm on how the birth order influences the children's speaking skill. We need to find out whether the birth order does influence the children's speaking skill.

CHILDREN SPEAKING SKILL

Language is acquired at a remarkable pace especially after the child has pronounced his/ her first word (Mussen et al, 1994). Language skill is comprehensive. It includes listening, speaking, reading and writing. Chomsky in Papalia *et al.* (2002), states that the only human who possesses the language. Then, animals are not able to communicate by using humans' language based on the following assumptions:

- 1) Speaking is inherited (genetic). All language development is the same and universal, and the environment has minor contribution toward the language success.
- 2) Language acquisition can be achieved in very short period of time, a four-year old child is able to speak as the adults do.
- 3) The children language settings can not provide sufficient data of the adults' complex language.

Language is one of the fundamental factors that distinguishes humans from other living things. It is a system of symbol to communicate with others that include creativity and system rules. The human beings can produce many meaningful sentences of limited words and rules by their

creativity. Hence, the language in a society consists of the individuals who express thoughts, feelings, and desires.

According to Chomsky in Hetherington (1999), children are born equipped with language acquisition tool (Language Acquisition Device) known as LAD. This is biologically gifted which is programmed to specify information coming from grammar. LAD is considered as a physiological part of the brain specialized to process language, and it is not linked to other cognitive skills. The children can not master the complex language in the short period of time without LAD. LAD also enables a child to differentiate which is language sound and which is not language sound.

Vygotsky in Santrock (2002) states that the children' cognitive and language development are closely related with culture and society where the children have been growing up. Vygotsky uses this term as Zone Proximal Development (ZPD) for difficult tasks to understand by the children, but the children will have skills to perform the tasks by the guidance and help from adults. The children need model from the adults in how to use correct sentences or vocabularies. Speaking is not just how to pronounce words or sounds, but it is a means to express, convey, and declare words or to communicate thoughts, ideas, or feelings experienced by the children such as sadness and happiness.

Role playing activities give significant benefits toward the children speaking skill as long as the adults can be the model and involved in it (Weisberg *et al*, 2013). The given model is to provide material and communication way in the role playing activities. Then, the adults provide guidance so that the children can interpret the activities taking place. The adult supervision

benefits the children, and it can be a good reference for the children.

According to Vygotsky, the children have three speaking development stages which are related to their thinking skills as the following.

- 1) External Stage: It happens when the children speak by using thinking materials outside of them. These thinking materials provide guidance, information and responsibility.
- 2) Egocentric Stage: The children speak according to their thinking and speaking behavior of the adults.
- 3) Internal Stage: The children thinking process has achieved the whole speaking skill.

Speaking is one of the most effective means of communication. Babies in their early periods have realized that they can convey their intended meaning through body language. Furthermore, it is not that easy to understand those meanings. Hence, the babies and children always try how the adult understand. This encourages people learn to speak and prove that speaking is the most effective means of communication compared with other forms of communication used before they have good speaking skill.

Yusuf (2000) says that the development of language is influenced by five factors namely health, intelligence, socioeconomic status, sex, and family relationships. Some factors influencing the language development are elaborated as follows.

- 1) Cognition (Process of Gaining Knowledge): Individuals' cognitive skill will affect how quick or slow their language development is. It is relevant to the previous discussion that there is a significant correlation between thoughts and language.

- 2) Role of Communication in the Family: Communication roles from many directions will accelerate the development of language of the families.
- 3) Number of children: In a family having many family members, the children language development is faster due to varied communications compared to those who have only a single child and no other member instead in the nuclear family.
- 4) Birth Order: The eldest child has higher speaking skill compared to the middle or the youngest child as the parents have more time to be with.
- 5) Bilingual Family: The children who grow up in a bilingual family will have better and faster language development compared to those who use one language as most children are accustomed to utilizing varied languages.

THE BIRTH ORDER

The eldest, middle, and the youngest is a nickname in a family. This is commonly called as the birth order. It has an impact on various aspects of children development. Adler in Roberts (1975) considers the birth order in the family has an important role in shaping an individual's personality; this birth order has differences in interpreting any gained experience.

The eldest child gets undivided attention from the parents, and this attention will be divided when the parents have another child. Most first-born children usually have accuracy, ambition, and aggression compared to their younger brothers/sisters. They tend to get and have higher education. The attention of parents encourages the first-born children to have a deep feeling to

be superior/ stronger, high anxiety and feeling of high protection. By the birth of younger brothers/ sisters, it produces traumatic effect of the first-born children as a single child. This changes situation and view toward the surrounding environment. This also shapes responsibility and protection to others; otherwise, it produces insecure feeling and less social interest.

The second or middle child usually begins his/ her life in a more comfortable situation to develop cooperation and social interest. He/she can easily adapt and have a higher sense of solidarity. At a certain stage, this child's personality is formed by observing his/her elder brother/ sister's attitude. The second or middle child will have a very high competition and little-heart feeling if his brother/ sister's attitude is full of anger and hatred. The second or middle child can develop these two-way directions. He/she will have willingness to be better than his/ her brother by good encouragement of competition. If he succeeds in achieving this competition, the child will develop revolutionary attitude and he feels that the authority can be replaced.

The youngest child tends to be the most creative and interesting. He is often spoiled, so it can produce a high risk of becoming a problematic child and having a feeling of inferiority, and he can not be an independent child. However, the child has many advantages, he is motivated to always surpass his older brothers/ sisters and he becomes an ambitious child. In other word, the birth order in a family has impacts on personality, behavior, ways of learning, and skill to earn a living. The birth order is explained by some experts as the following.

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In the child development process, the child improves in terms of quantity and quality (flexibility and complexity). His speaking skill gradually improves started on how he uses his facial expression to communicate. He also uses his body language and gesture to express his need through communication by clear and precise teachings. It can be seen from the beginning of child development where the babies babble sound into meaningful sound system.

Piaget in Hurlock (1978) states that the language is not as a separated natural characteristic, but as one of the skills derived from cognitive maturity. Language is formed by reasoning; language development should be based on more fundamental and common changes in cognition. Thus, cognitive development stages determine the language development. Piaget asserts that the complex structure of the language is not derived by nature, and is not learned from the environment. The language structures occurs resulted from continuous interactions between the child's high cognitive function and linguistic environment (also in other environments). This structure occurs inevitably following a series of interactions. Hence, the structure does not need to be provided by nature.

The birth order is associated with variations in a sibling relationship. The first-born child is expected to have abilities in controlling themselves and to have more responsibilities compared to other siblings. The eldest child will demonstrate his/ her responsibility and always practice how to control himself/ herself. If a conflict happens, most parents tend to protect younger children. In one hand, this precisely forms a sense of independence of the first child, and

on the other hand, it forms an envy feeling and hostility. The first child is more dominant in the family, competent, and powerful than other siblings, so he is expected to help and keep the younger ones.

Based on an assumption, the eldest child receives full attention from the parents for a while until the mother comes home from the hospital by bringing a new baby. In addition, most fathers and mothers have a very high expectation for the first child, and he/she tries to perform it. In another theory, the first child has more responsibility and he/she is expected to support his/her younger brothers/ sisters from which it strengthens his/her brain.

According to Bornstein and Lamb (1992) nativism views that the language skill of an individual is determined by genetic factor of the parents. If the parents have good and fast language skill, the child's language skill will improve well. Otherwise, if the parents' language skill is slow and insufficient, the child's language skill will be slow and poor.

Rahmawati et al describes in her research that the child's speaking skill is influenced by some factors including age, sex, and family environmental condition. Different inputs of vocabularies will be greatly affected by the child's speaking fluency. In general, the middle child speaking skill is better compared to the eldest and youngest child, but with some treatments they will have the same speaking skills based on their needs. The language skill of the middle child will be faster than the eldest or the youngest one. This is due to the eldest child who has only downward communication direction and the youngest child who only has upward communication direction. If the parents give equal and fair

attention, the language skill will develop optimally no matter the birth order is.

Meanwhile, Yusuf (2000) considers that the eldest child has higher speaking skill compared to the middle or youngest child because the parents have more time to give more attention. This condition will change after the parents have other children. The parents must divide their attention to their children, so that each child will not receive more attention compared to the eldest and youngest child. This proves that the previous communication form is more intensive and undivided, so it helps the eldest child in achieving his/her speaking skill.

Zhang *et al* (2008) states that the language teaching at schools is also conducted at home. The teaching at schools as well as interaction with other students also influence the child's speaking development; the child develops imitation. Females have higher speaking skill compared to males. De Rosnay *et al* (2013) states that the interaction between peers can influence the child's speaking skill. They do speaking activities every day. They establish similar language skill and complement with the others. Broad and complex interactions with the society will enlarge speaking skill. The children speaking skill is potential by the following factors:

- 1) Completeness of speech organ
- 2) Speaking readiness
- 3) Good model for the children
- 4) Opportunities for speaking practice
- 5) Motivation for learning and practicing
- 6) Counseling

A child regardless of the birth order will undergo language development, especially speaking skill. It is affected by many factors. To help the children speaking development,

the parents can also provide appropriate stimulation based on their uniqueness. By the development and physical maturity especially related to the process of speaking, the communication has increased and expanded such as doing communication with the people nearby and new people they have just met, and friends.

CONCLUSION

Based on its function, language is a means of communication used by an individual in the interaction or relationship with others. Language is a means of interaction which consists of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The children speaking skill is influenced by many factors such as the birth order, age, sex, and intelligence. Related to the birth order, the second or middle child usually has higher speaking skill compared to the eldest and youngest child. He/ she can communicate from two-way communication which gives benefits for him/ her. He can also develop speaking skill from parents, older brothers/ sisters, and younger brothers/ sisters.

No matter the birth order is, speaking skill of any children can be optimally achieved if the parents provide opportunities to communicate and practice based on their needs. The parents are expected to give attention and communication activities to the children by understanding their position. The children speaking skill will develop related to the proper stimulation based on qualitative and quantitative of the parents.

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