



A Syntactico-Pragmatic Study of the Speech of Mild Mentally Retarded Children

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Abstract

Research on the speech of mild mentally retarded children from the syntactic and pragmatic perspective has not been widely conducted. Research on the speech of mild mentally retarded children was commonly conducted from the phonological perspective. This has encouraged this researcher to conduct this study. Despite experiencing various limitations, mild mentally retarded children are still categorized as children who can be educated to become semi-skilled workers. To become semi-skilled workers, they need good and polite language skills. The purpose of this study is, syntactically, to find out sentences structures, sentences types, and average length of speech and, pragmatically, to find out speech types and politeness that can be maximized in the utterances of the mild mentally retarded children. This is a qualitative study employing a cross-section method. The research subjects were 13 mild mentally retarded children. The research data were in the form of fragments of stories and conversations drawn through recording techniques, noting, observing proficient free involvement, and observing the involvement in skill for approximately three months. The data were analyzed using the pragmatic and syntactic techniques. The findings of this study: Syntactically, this study found speech using sentence structures of S-P, S-P-A, A-S-P-A, A-S-P, A-S-A-P, S-A-P, A-S-P-Ag; S-P-Ag; the sentence types found are simple sentences; and the MLU of 6.94. Pragmatically, there are types of (1) constative, (2) locutionary, (3) representative, directive, expressive, (4) directive, and (5) literal speeches; the observance of the tact maxim, agreement maxim, and generosity maxim and the violation of the tact maxim, the approbation maxim, the modesty maxim, and the sympathy maxim.. To minimize politeness violation, it is recommended that further research be conducted in larger amount of subjects in a longer period of time.

INTRODUCTION

Humaera (2012) said that the number of people suffering from mental retardation in Indonesia is around 1-3%. The percentage consists of 85% of patients with mild mental retardation, 10% of patients with moderate mental retardation, 4% of people with severe mental retardation, and 1-2% of people with very severe mental retardation. Based on the report, the highest number is children with mild mental retardation.

Basically, mild mentally retarded children acquire language skills in the same way as normal children. However, mild mentally retarded children are slower in acquiring language skills. The process of acquiring language in mildly mentally retarded children usually stops at puberty, i.e. at the age of approximately 15 years. The main difficulty of mild mentally retarded children in developing their language is related to the acquisition of grammar rules and vocabulary, the use and understanding of syntax, and the inability to use language correctly (Kartadinata, 1996: 54).

In addition to having linguistic abilities, in communication, unwittingly, children with mild mental retardation as normal children also have pragmatic abilities. As stated by Searle (1969: 16), language communication units are not only in the form of symbols, words or sentences, or even signs, but rather in the form of symbol production, words, or sentences in the performance of speech acts. According to Mey (1993), pragmatically, children learn to use language effectively in accordance with their social context. In normal conversation, participants must share in turn and be on the same topic of conversation.

Despite various limitations, mild mentally retarded children are still categorized as capable students who can be educated to become semi-skilled workers such as laundry work, agriculture, animal husbandry, and housework (Ricardson, 1989). To become semi-skilled workers, mild mentally retarded children need good and polite language skills. This is in line with the goal of education for mild mentally retarded children, namely to develop the potential that is still owned optimally so that they can live independently and be able to adjust to the environment in which they live (Ministry of Education, 2003: 23).

On this basis, this study aims to find syntactic and pragmatic aspects in the utterances of mild mentally retarded children whose development can still be maximized. Syntactically, the speech of mild mentally retarded children is examined from the perspective of the sentence structure, the sentence type, and the average length of the utterances (MLU). Meanwhile, pragmatically the speech was examined from the perspective of the types of speech and politeness.

According to Badudu (1975: 32), Alwi et al (2000: 321), and Sugiono (2009: 112), the basic sentence consists of eight sentence structures. The eight sentence structures include (1) Subject-Predicator (SP), (2) Object-Predicator-Object (S-P-O), (3) Subject-Predicator-Agent (S-P-Ag), (4) Subject-Predicator-Adverbial (S-P-A), (5) Subject-Predicator-Object-Agent (S-P-O-Ag), (6) Subject-Predicator-Object-Adverbial (SPOA), (7) Adverbial-Subject-Predicator-Object-Agent (A-S-P-O-Ag), and (8) Subject-Predicator-Object-Agent-Adverbial (SPO-Ag-A). Meanwhile, based on the number of clauses, according to Alwi et al (2000: 338), sentences consist of simple sentences and compound sentences. Measurement of the development of the syntax of mild mentally retarded children used Brown's theory (in Dardjowidjoyo, 2000: 40) about Mean Length of Utterance (MLU). Normal child MLU is calculated by summing the number of morphemes in speech divided by the number of speeches. MLU calculations generally consider 100 utterances. The calculation of the MLU for mild mentally retarded children does not use the standard 100 utterances but the number is converted into 10 utterances only on the grounds that the number of their utterances is very limited.

According to Austin (1962), declarative speech act can be categorized into two, namely constative and performative speech acts. Gunarwan (1994: 45) states that there are three types of acts that should get attention. The three types of acts are (1) locutionary act, (2) illocutionary act, and (3) perlocutionary act. Searle (1969) classifies speech act into five types, namely representative/assertive, directive, expressive, commissive, and declaration speech act. Meanwhile, Rustono (2000: 71) summarizes the various opinions of experts related to the types

of speech act into five categories, namely (1) constative and performative speech act, (2) locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary speech act, (3) representative, directive, expressive, commissive, and declaration speech act, (4) direct/indirect speech act, and (5) literal/non-literal speech act. Those five categories are used to find the types of speech of mild mentally retarded children.

Research on politeness in the speech act of mild mentally retarded children uses the theory of Leech (1983: 132). According to the expert, one of the goals of people making verbal communication is developing, maintaining or fostering, and improving good personal and social relationships with others. To achieve this goal, Leech (1983: 132) proposes that Maxims in politeness including (1) tact maxim, (2) generosity maxim, (3) approbation maxim, (4) modesty maxim, (5) agreement maxim, and (6) sympathy maxim.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative approach with cross-section method for approximately three months, following the stages of collecting, filtering, and describing data, as well as drawing conclusions. The research subjects were a number of children who met the research criteria. The setting of this study was Specific school for retarded children (SLB) Negeri Ungaran and SLB Negeri Semarang. The two State SLBs have ideal number of students. Based on the provisions of the Education National Standard Body (BSNP), the ideal number of ASTMR students in one class is between 5 and 7.

The research data were in the form of story and conversational fragments spoken by mild mentally retarded children when they attended the teaching-learning process for Indonesian language subjects. The data source of this study was in the form of stories and conversations of 6 mild mentally retarded children in grade 5 at Ungaran State SLB and 7 at Semarang State SLB. The data were drawn using the referential method of recording, noting, understanding independency involvement skill (SBLIC), and refer to understanding involvement skill (SLC). At the screening stage, the speech is transcribed by selecting only the relevant elements. In the

description stage, the data is presented by grouping it according to the research variables, which are based on syntactic aspects using traditional techniques and pragmatic aspects using pragmatic equivalent techniques (Sudaryanto 2015: 203-205). Prior to the stage of drawing conclusions, the data interpretation was carried out by associating it with its context and theory.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Syntactic Analysis

Basic sentence structure

The basic sentence structures in this study were determined based on eight structure categories, namely (1) S-P, (2) S-P-O, (3) S-P-Ag, (4) S-P-A, (5) S-P-O-Ag, (6) S-P-O-A, (7) A-S-P-O-Ag, and (8) S-P-O-Ag-A. Based on research data, not all basic sentence structures are found in the speech of mild mentally retarded children. Other sentence structures are just found beyond the eight basic categories. Many unstructured sentences are found in their speech. Of the 231 acts that became the research data, it was found that 189 acts are unstructured speeches because speech is a non-subject clause, improper wording, so that the speech intent is unclear, and they are only in the form of phrases. Structured speech consists of 42 sentences with the basic sentence structures of S-P, S-P-A, and S-P-Ag. In addition to the structure of the basic sentences, other structures were also found, namely the sentences with the structure of A-S-P-A, A-S-P, S-A-P, and A-S-P-Ag. To make it easier to examine the findings, the structure categories are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Sentence Structure in the Speech of Mild mentally retarded Children.

Sentence Structures	
Basic Sentence Structures	Other Structures
S-P	A-S-P-A
S-P-A	A-S-P
S-P-Ag	S-A-P
	A-S-P-Ag

Based on Table 1, it can be concluded that the sentence structure in the utterances of the mild mental retardation children is very limited. In addition, the structures of the sentences in their speech are less varied. The sentence structures

found are mostly patterned S-P with Adverbial (A) which varies. In producing sentences, children with mild mental retardation use sentence structures that have a lot of deficits. The Object function in the spoken form is not found. When compared with Echa's ability in Dardjowidjojo's (2010) study, Echa was able to produce S-P-Ag structured sentences when she was 3.0 years old. The sentence, among others, *lain Panelan itu dikutuk sama nenek sihil* (Panelan was condemned by the grandmother Sihil), meaning that *Pangeran itu dikutuk sama nenek sihir* (the Prince was condemned by a grandmother (Dardjowidjojo 2010: 203). Likewise, the S-P-O structured sentences are also found in Echa's speech at the age of 3: 0 years.

Sentence Type Based on Amount of Clause

According to the Indonesian Standard Grammar (2000: 337), based on the number of clauses, the sentence is divided into two, namely (1) single sentences and (2) compound sentences. Compound sentences consist of (1) equivalent compound sentences and (2) multilevel compound sentences. Based on research data, in the speech of mild mentally retarded children only "single sentences" are found. Equivalent compound sentences were found to be categorized as outlier data because they were only found in one research subject so that they did not represent the competence of mild mentally retarded children. Meanwhile, multilevel compound sentences were not found in his speech. In detail the findings relating to the type of sentence are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Types of utterances in the Speech of Children with Mild Mental Retardation

Sentence types based on the number of clauses	Total
Simple sentence	40
Compound sentence	2 (<i>outlyer</i>)
Complex sentence	0
Non-sentential utterance	189

On the basis of Table 2, it can be said that the sentences found in the speech of the mild mentally retarded children are short and simple sentences. Based on the completeness of the elements, the sentences are actually dominated by

incomplete sentences. The utterances of mild mentally retarded children are predominantly short acts in the form of phrases and lines of words whose composition is improper so it does not meet the criteria as sentences. Based on the research of Dardjowidjojo (2000: 204-218), Echa has been able to produce compound sentences equivalent to 3.0 years old. At the age of 4.0 years, Echa has been able to produce multilevel compound sentences (1) conditions, (2) time, (3) causes, (4) goals, (5) facts, and (6) attributive.

When compared with the results of Brown's (1973) study, British children can produce coordinative compound sentences using 'and' when they are 3.0–3.5 years old. The causal compound sentences using 'because' is produced when the child is 3.0–3.5 years old. Complex sentences using 'if' is produced when he is 4.5 years old. Meanwhile, complex sentences using 'because' and 'when/but/so' are produced when he is 5.0 years old.

Average Length of Examination (MLU)

To measure the average length of speech (MLU), this study refers to the opinion of Dardjowidjojo (2000: 40) that MLU is calculated based on the number of morphemes in speech and then divided by the number of said utterances. Generally 100 utterances are used. Of this number the number of morphemes is calculated. The result is divided by 100. There are several signs to calculate the morpheme in the utterance, namely components such as "fire", self names such as "Abdul Majid" are considered one morpheme because they contain one meaning. Besides this, affixes are counted as one morpheme.

The calculation of MLU for mild mentally retarded children in this study did not use the standard 100 utterances but used the benchmark of 10 utterances. The conversion was carried out because of the limited number of speeches produced by mild mentally retarded children. From MLU calculations from 13 research data sources, only 11 research data sources were MLU calculated. Two of them cannot be calculated because there are less than 10 words. There is also an average MLU of mild mentally retarded children that is 6.94. In detail, MLU mild mentally retarded children who are the subject of research are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Mean Length of Tests of Mild Mentally Retarded Children.

Code	Number of utterances	Number of morphemes	MLU
1	10	99	9.9
2	10	86	8.6
3	10	90	9.0
4	10	78	7.8
5	10	63	6.3
6	10	61	6.1
7	10	86	8.6
8	10	75	7.5
9	10	43	4.3
10	4	-	-
11	10	35	3.5
12	10	48	4.8
13	8	-	-
Average			6.94

In Table 3 it can be seen that the average MLU of mild mentally retarded children is 6.94. When juxtaposed with PRcha Echa when she was 4.3 years old, namely 7.8 (Dardjowidjojo 2000: 239). Based on these findings, it can be said that MLU mild mentally retarded children have a deficit. The low level of MLU for mild mentally retarded children compared to MLU Echa when it was 5 years old was evident from the fact that in the speech of mild mentally retarded children there were no equivalent or multilevel compound sentences. Meanwhile, Echa from the age of 4.3 has been productive in producing multilevel compound sentences.

Pragmatic Analysis

Type of Speech

Regarding the type of speech, the findings of the research data are (1) constative, (2) locutionary, (3) representative, directive, and expressive, (4) direct, as well as (5) literal speeches. The type of speech that is found is all really meaningful. This is because mild mentally retarded children have difficulty being able to think abstractly. Any learning must be related to concrete objects. Such conditions relate to weakness in short-term memory, weakness in reasoning, and difficulty in developing ideas. In detail all of these are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Types of Speech in RWA Speech Based on Actual and Potential Capabilities.

Category	Type of acts
1	constative
2	locution
3	representative, directive, ekspresive
4	direct
5	literal

Regarding abstract thinking skills, Brandone et al (2000) stated that normal children began to produce language that was symbolic when they were 7 years old. Meanwhile, normal children have mastered abstract words since they were 9 years old. The conditions experienced by children with mild mental retardation related to abstract thinking ability who experience a deficit by Winnepenninckx et al (2003) are said to be the general characteristics of mildly retarded children due to their low intelligence. The learning capacity of abstract mentally retarded children is very limited. Learning ability tends to be without understanding or tends to learn by parroting.

Regarding the conditions experienced by mentally retarded children, Apriyanto (2012: 50) suggests that in providing learning to mildly mentally retarded children teachers need to pay attention to several things, namely: (1) the material taught needs to be broken down into parts small and arranged sequentially, (2) each part of the teaching material is taught one by one and carried out repeatedly, (3) learning activities should be carried out in concrete situations, (4) given motivation to do what he is learning, (5) creating a pleasant learning atmosphere by avoiding learning activities that are too formal, and (6) using props in concretizing abstract concepts.

Politeness

Based on the data, it is found that there are speeches of mild mentally retarded children speech that adhere to the principles of politeness and the speeches that violate the principles of politeness. It is found is the speeches are in compliance with the tact maxim, the agreement maxim, and the sympathy maxim of politeness. Meanwhile, the politeness maxims violated include the tact maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, and sympathy maxim of

politeness. All of these are detailed in the following Table 5.

Table 5. The politeness of the speech of mild mentally retarded children.

Observance/Violation Politeness Maxims of Politeness Maxims	
Observance	tact maxim, agreement maxim, generosity maxim
Violation	tact maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, sympathy maxim

Table 5 shows that in the speech of mild mental retarded children there are many utterances that violate the politeness maxims. In line with the violation of the politeness scale, Somantri (2007: 105) says that the low IQ of the mild mentally retarded children has an impact on their inability of considering something, distinguishing between good and bad, and distinguishing between right and wrong. Winnepenninckx et al (2003) state that mild mentally retarded children are easily influenced and tend to do something without thinking about the consequences. This is what causes the politeness of mild mentally retarded children to suffer a deficit. Related to the violation of politeness in the speech of mild mentally retarded children, other researchers can conduct research with a probing question technique in a longer period of time because it involves behavioral changes.

CONCLUSION

In line with the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded as follows. (1) Syntactically in the speech of mild mentally retarded children found the basic sentence structure of S-P, S-P-A, and S-P-Ag and other sentence structures A-S-P-A, A-S-P, S-A-P and A-S-P-Ag; the type of sentence based on the number of clauses is only found "single sentence". Majemuk equivalent sentences found to be categorized as outlier data, multilevel compound sentences not found; MLU mild mentally retarded children is 6.94. (2) The types of utterances found are speech (1) constative, (2) locutionary, (3) representative, directive, expressive, (4) direct, and

(5) literal; modesty compliance found is maxims of tact, agreement, and sympathy maxims, the politeness maxims which are violated include the maxim of tact, approbation, modesty, sympathy.

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