

Discourse Act Contributing to the Linguistic Formulation from Word to Sentence: Albanian Children

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Abstract

In this argument, based on concrete observations of toddlers 2-4 years old, the case of lexical input at this age will be examined, as used in speech acts from communication through specific words—accompanied by extralinguistic means—and holophrases, to generating simple sentences as special constructs of syntax. Early phases of acquiring language have already slowly started in the first years of their lives. The child follows the unstoppable path to understanding and enriching knowledge. To support our study, in addition to their group and family life, didactic materials will also be included; as part of our study, these were “Open and Find out” books, which feature secret windows, and puzzle books, which contain plenty of material that serves children’s speech acquisition. The theoretical treatment of the problem above will be supported mostly by Albanian language data, or by Albanian children—as native speakers of that mother tongue. The principal phases of acquiring the language have slowly started during the first years of the child’s life. Now the child follows the unstoppable path to gaining and enriching his knowledge. The methodology followed in this study includes preschool children. During this phase, the child articulates more lexical words than grammatical words. We noticed this phenomenon when observing 14 children, who were selected from two age groups. The conversations of subjects of different ages and genders were analyzed, as well as the vocabularies they possessed. In this treatment, the linguistic features that children tend to change from one phase of life to another will be shown. It is also interesting to emphasize how, even in the word- and sentence-producing phase, children develop their skills through the use of didactic books.

Keywords: Discourse Act, Linguistic Formulation, Word, Sentence

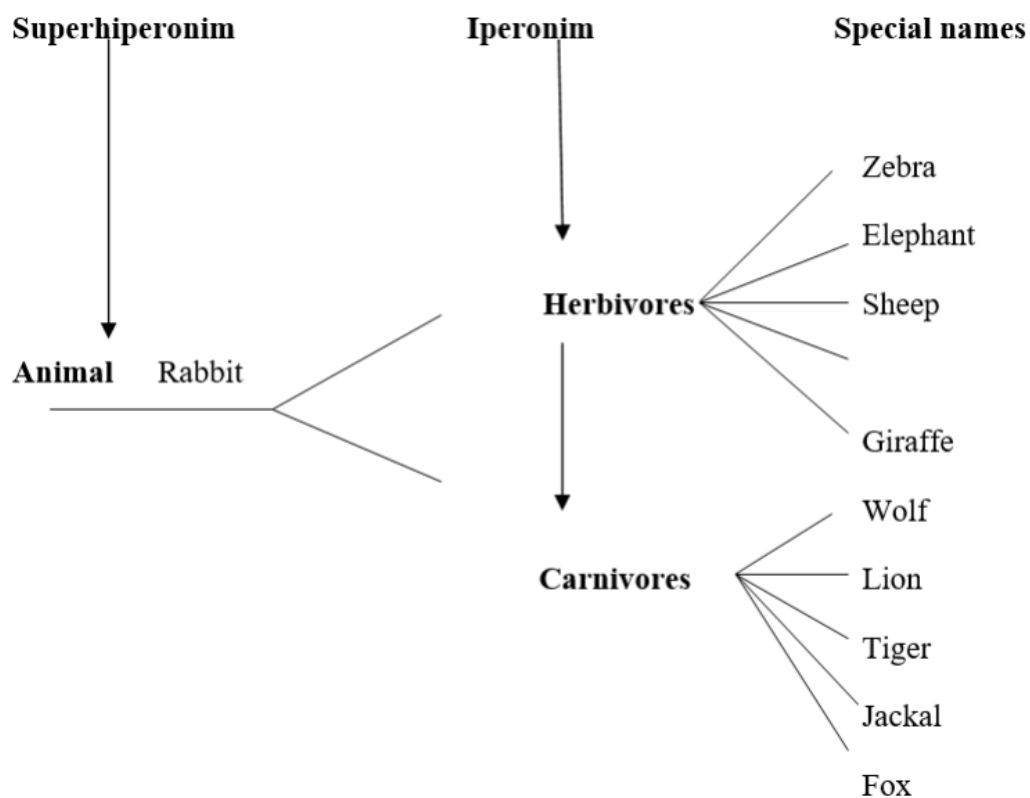
Introduction

Several scholars have pointed out that by the age of one to two years, the child continues to remain closely dependent, on an affective level, on his mother; he likes to be with her, to tell her everything he does, to have her admiration, and to make her participate in all his joys and sorrows [1].

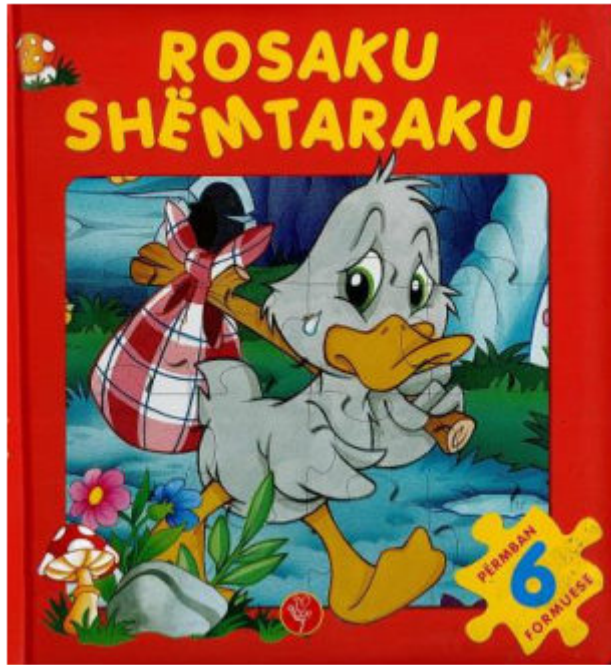
Among these, we can mention Marilyn Shatz, who writes, in terms of shaping and enriching vocabulary, that first of all there is an explosion of a large number of names by the child because, from a philosophical point of view, recognition starts from labeling objects. She states that practitioners and parents have noted that some children, once they discover that things have a name, try to label them [2]...

Also, Genter (1982) suspects that nouns prevail over verbs, because most of them refer to first objects and are easily recognized, while verbs are supposed to be understood as words that can define the connection between objects and the object itself; as a result, it must be cognitively easier to give nouns a meaning. For example, in the animal world, young children initially label: dog, cat, airplane, which designate basic-level categories; after this, they use examples at a more general level.

It is noted that this phenomenon can be explained by the broad noun classification category, for example: overgeneralized nouns, generalized nouns, and specific nouns; emphasizing knowledge of the world around them, children pass naturally to those that are called specific names, according to the following scheme [3]. From this text, we have the explanation: The difference between iperonimeve and generalized nouns is that the former, although equipped with a general meaning, nevertheless have semantic spaces to describe. For example, if we want to place under the above scheme the nouns leopard, elephant, shark, animals, zebra, lion, deer, giraffe, orangutan, sheep, wolf, jackal, fox,... applying the concepts explained above: we start with the noun of animals, dividing herbivores and carnivores.



On the basis of this presentation of generalized names (superhiperonime), hiperonime, and specific names, etc., exercises may be done in which, on the one hand, we present mixed animal figures (carnivorous and herbivorous) and connect them to a haystack and a piece of hanging meat—a very lexically beneficial physical and mental activity. Thus, these exercises and preschool books that suit certain ages help children grow rich linguistically. The didactic work carried out with children of this age was to confront them with three types of didactic titles suitable for that age, through which the young develop physically as well as linguistically. The first titles work with image-formation puzzles. Thus, puzzle books help children to enrich their vocabularies. They get acquainted with figures from the world of animals, which are very popular with children.



Illustrated books always arouse special interest in children, especially those aged 1-3 years old. Furthermore, the animal characters in these books are children's best friends. The actions that appear in the illustrations ensure mental and physical development. Children become capable of undertaking the responsibilities of their age. Researcher R.H. Largo states: "A feature of child language development is they often broaden the real meaning of a word. For example by the word "cow" he names all bigger animals, not only cows but horses, goats and sheep as well. The child doesn't have only the tendency to expand the meaning of words. He can also restrict it. For example the word "car" applies only to the family car and not other cars. Even toy cars or illustrated cars aren't considered cars to him. So the word "car" is basically the name of the family car [4]."¹



At first we describe the first book illustration which is in the child's hands. The way he manages to maneuver the particles of the image to create a full and clear illustration. The first part includes these extract elements: Duck, – water,-5 ducklings,- puzzle. Thus, children acquire the above words by repeating puzzle formation several times. While the second didactic material used by us in this essay are book with "Open the window and discover" illustrations, in which there are questions and answers which provide material to the toddler regarding to farm animals and their life and gestures they perform, such as the turkey's gllu-gllu"; so children become capable of finding differences of these similar looking birds. On the other side of the figure are questions such as "Who sleeps in a nest? Who sleeps in a cottage?" (Note that in a linguistic point of view, the pronoun "who" is only used to humans not animals or objects. We didn't change it to keep the citations.) Open the window and see the rabbit and the chicken. Two characters which are very familiar to children's life and games. Through these materials centered to figures which give the right messages to infants for their age, we keep in consideration that these figures perceive the right words to children. Two successive figures of our books familiarize the toddler to other farm animals. The following questions: "Who stays in a barn? Who stays in the meadow?" are rightly answered once the toddler opens the window and sees two other animals, the pig and the lamb. Another element that would encourage the toddler to think is the question: "Which is the difference between the goose and the duck?" The figure makes clear the obvious answer. "The goose is white." So we are dealing the thought-expansion, but also linguistic development, so that children enlarge their sentences, transforming them from one-worded sentences to multi-worded sentences such as: "Chicken sit on the roost.

Cocks go gllu-gllu.

Birds go tweet-tweet.



Other images displayed facing each other provide the toddler with the necessary material about farm animals, including the gestures and actions they perform, such as the “gllu-gllu” sounds of the turkey. Thus, children become capable of finding differences in look-alike birds. On the other side of the figure stand questions such as “Who stays in a nest? Who stays in a roost?” You open the window and find the “rabbit” and the “chicken”, two characters well-known to children that are part of their lives and childhood games. Through these materials, which have at their center figures that give appropriate messages for the age we are considering, we take into account the fact that these children, through the figures, perceive the appropriate word for each picture in the book.

With the growth of the baby, the length of his sentences grows and this element is exactly a good indicator of syntactic development, with other words, the movement of the sentence in another state in quantity, also in quality. In his study “A language acquisition”, he presented for the first time such an index for measuring the length of expressions called MLU [7]. MLU is based on the average length of sentences produced by the child, taken under study in spontaneous speech. This length is determined by the number of smaller and meaningful units that are Syntagma. Adding any of them, marks an increase of syntactic ability of the child. Children who have the same MLU have the same level of syntactic development and the same level of linguistic complexity. According to R Brown, to measure a child’s MLU you should make at least a half-hour conversation with him or her. Brown accompanied the MLU concept with a set of rules for the calculation of the lexeme, among which we can mention the following:

Counted as a single lexeme

- Compound words
- Proper nouns
- Irregular verbs in the past, as there is no evidence that the child connects this form with its counterpart in the present
- Auxiliary verbs and modals: have, be, could, should
- Positive and negative particles: yes, no
- Diminutive or reduced forms of names, because for the child this is seen as a standard form
- Counted as two lexemes:
- Possessive nouns
- Plural nouns
- Regular verbs in the past
- Verbs in the gerund
- Interjections of the type: em, eh,

oh, etc., are not taken into account – At least 100 phrases spoken by the child should be analyzed.

Usually, this stage begins at about the age of 12-26 months, and most are two-word sentences, although there are cases of sentences with three or four words. The interest of the child in conversations grows, and he starts to listen attentively when his parents and sisters talk to each other. The main characteristic of this stage is the use of content words—nouns, verbs, and adjectives—and the lack of function words such as linking words, plural endings, prepositions, etc. This indicates that the child is not copying adults. In the sentence "Agron drink water", articulated by the child, one understands that the child manages to distinguish at least two classes of words. He distinguishes nouns:

"Agron" and "water" from the verb "drink". This is shown by the fact that he matches the verb with the subject "Agron".

This does not mean that they cannot create groups of words built according to their own rules, which leads to unusual results. Examples include "Agron eat" or "Agron eat bread". This phenomenon is related to initial difficulties and errors that such children quickly correct. Unusual sentence formations show that the child does not acquire language through imitation, but through the structure of rules [4].

From its beginnings, language is deeply creative, which means that many of these sentences are never produced by adults. With the increasing complexity of expressions, the use of function words is also added. A conjecture on this issue was raised by R. Miller [5], who stated that children make this choice because these words (content words) are more pronounced and more frequent in the speech of adults, and therefore are noticed more.

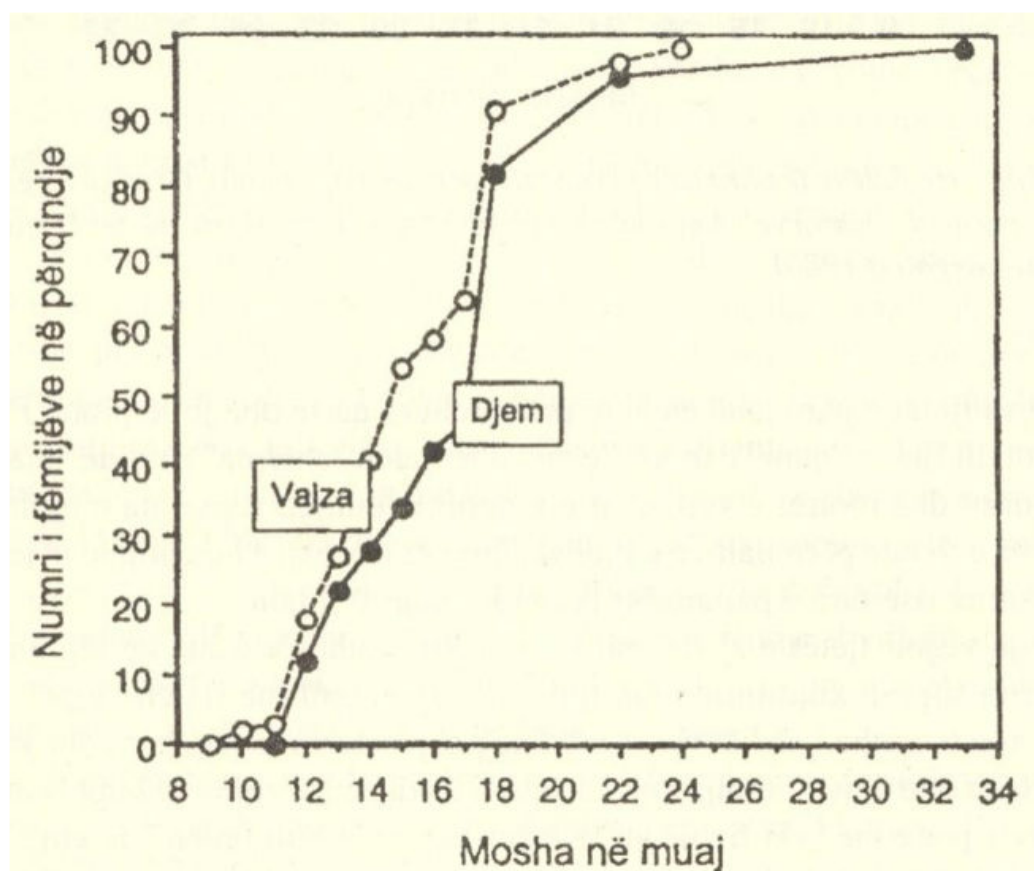
Knowledge of child syntax is based on what children themselves say, that is, on their speech. To achieve this level of knowledge, linguists have conducted extensive studies based on listening to children when they play with each other or with older people, in experiments, or through direct interviews. This is achieved through the spontaneous speech of the child; however, even though there may be a large body of data, much remains unknown, due to the fact that the linguist fails to fully understand what the child knows, as many structures may not have had the opportunity to be expressed or used. Psycholinguists give primary importance to syntactic studies: the way young children progress from the word to a group of words or to the sentence, which is equivalent to full communication.

Double word phase expressions (holophrases)

About the 60s under the influence of linguistic vision of Chomsky, linguists assumed that the language of the child starts when the combine begins to merge the words or morpheme. This stage is the stage of double word expressions and was described by Bloom

"... Perhaps the most contested issue in linguistic studies ..." [6]

The ability to analyze and create sentences appears in children in different ways. Some children manage to create two-word sentences at the age of 18-24 months, and others at the age of 30-36 months. Regardless of the age at which they create sentences, it can be said that this process takes place among all children in the same way, subject to the same regularities [4, p.316].



In this process, girls present a more rapid development than boys. With sentences or two-word expressions, the child can express himself in a more differentiated manner than with isolated words. He can communicate that a person or object is present or not, can make the connection of actions and persons with their location, and can express his desires and goals.

In 1986, L. Gleitman [8] supported the idea that children learn these two word categories almost separately from each other. R. Brown (1973) states regarding this stage of language development:

"... In the first phase the child is acting as the main elements of the sentence were optional and it doesn't seem that occurs due to a limited sentences complexity. In the second phase and beyond it acts as grammatical morpheme were optional ... He doesn't use what is called linguistically mandatory. This makes me think that the child expects to be understood when it does not produce any intelligible words. In fact, we discovered that he usually takes so as long as he is available at home, in the family environment or with relatives who know his history and trends. It can be said therefore that the first phase is well-adjusted for its communication ... but that would fail in other environments less familiar. This shows that the largest dimension of language development is to learn to express always and immediately some things like move, number, time ...".

Double-word phase expressions are also called telegraphic [9], for the reason that the lack of function words makes them look more like a telegram. The child speaks more lexical words than grammatical words, with a noticeable lack of grammatical morphemes. Another linguist, Lois Bloom, regarded as a forerunner of the modern study of child language development, conducted an extensive study on the manner in which the nature of children's conversations changed during the second year of life.

Conversations were initially analyzed for four children at three different ages: when they were 21 months old and produced mostly single-word expressions, then at the age of 25 months, during which they used more two-word expressions, and finally when they were 3 years and 6 months old, when they expressed themselves in phrases of 3 or 4 words. At what age are children able to rely on what others have said and carry the argument of the conversation? In other words, at what age do most children observe the relationship? It is interesting to notice that in the phase of producing single words, phrases that continue the argument of conversation are higher in number than those that turn.

Conclusion

In the conclusion of this material, it should be emphasized that children can be helped in language acquisition and general linguistic development thanks to many factors, among which are these didactic books, in which we tried to reflect material increasingly gathered from the mouths of preschool children. Our subjects allow us to conclude on their level and ability, as follows:

- Recognition newly special lexeme;
- Conversion of words from passive to active status;
- Enrichment of lexical input, taken as a whole.

- In addition, the lexematic case appears to become "construction" material for simple sentences, which the subjects begin to use according to communicative situations.

It is the moment to suggest that linguistic development and lexical acquisition at these ages depend in the first instance on the permanent presence of the educator, as well as on maintaining – and increasing – the necessary requirements to keep the child in a position to develop abilities toward the enrichment of vocabulary, up to his expectations, which is materialized and concrete in the structure of semantically related sentences.

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