
**A MORPHO-SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF 2-5 YEARS NIGERIAN PIDGIN
AND IGBO ACQUIRING CHILDREN**

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ABSTRACT

Language is a purely human activity for the communication of ideas, feelings, emotions, desires, etc. through a commonly agreed upon symbol. The symbol can be speech, gestures, etc. There are six levels of language analysis; phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. This work investigated the morpho-semantic analysis of the speech of 2 to 5 years old children acquiring Igbo and Nigerian Pidgin respectively. It also investigated if these children can properly assign meaning to the words and at what stage they do this as well as the noticeable differences between the speech of 2 and 3-year-old and 3 and 5-year-old children. To achieve these, the author made use of self-designed wordlist of 20 words. This wordlist was presented in form of interview to 6 children – 3 for Igbo and 3 for Nigerian Pidgin. Based on these, the findings showed that the children acquiring Nigerian Pidgin produce the final consonant as in /beti/ although in a distorted manner. Also, the alveolar lateral [l] is replaced with [j] after the close-mid vowel has been added to break the consonants cluster. Also, there are observable differences in the speech of 2 years' children acquiring language when compared with that of 3 and 5 years' children acquiring Igbo and Pidgin respectively and children from 2 to 5 years' attach meaning to lexical items, although at varying degrees.

KEYWORDS: Morpho-Semantic Analysis, Language Acquisition, Nigerian Pidgin and Igbo

INTRODUCTION

Language is a purely human devised means for the communication of ideas, feelings, emotions, desires, etc. through a commonly agreed upon symbol. The symbol can be speech, gestures, etc. it is normally learnt through a system of symbols which every fluent native speaker possesses. There are several theories on how children acquire language however, despite the fact that these theories differ, there are developmental milestones that every child must undergo in acquiring any language. We will not be looking at all the stages of language acquisition but will be looking at the stages that cover the morphological acquisition characteristics and the characteristics that cover the way they give meanings to the words they produce. This study will examine and describe the way the children receive adequate input regarding morphology (how they use grammatical markers, rules, etc.) as well as the way they give words meaning (semantics).

Semantics is possibly the least understood aspect of language development. Most research on language development and language use focuses on form (e.g., phonology, utterance length, the use of different morpho-syntactic constructions), rather than on semantic content (i.e.,

meaning). Furthermore, semantics is usually studied in terms of vocabulary as an inventory, which has more to do with reference (the set of phenomena that a word applies to) than with sense (the concept associated with a word; (Clark & Clark, 1977).

Many of the studies of young children's acquisition of morphology and syntax are based on naturalistic production data. When these data are compared with adult language which is considered to be the children's goal, the standard adult reference is usually a powerful and complete syntactic framework, whether generative, cognitive or lexical-functional. Few studies have tried to use the same kind of naturalistic data as a reference to compare the child's language with. This has been done mainly in studies of imitation, children's errors or negative evidence, and in computational simulations of language acquisition. What has not been done is to try to find similarities and differences between child and adult language with the same tool, the same standpoint and the same type of data. This would allow a quantitative evaluation of how much children really create when they are learning language and how much they reproduce or copy. What looks similar between child and adult is not necessarily copied by the former from the latter, but could also arise from previously-acquired language structures or from the necessities of the situation; in the same ways one adult's language is similar to another's. This study is devoted to the investigating the morpho-semantic development of children acquiring Igbo as well as those acquiring Nigerian Pidgin.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper adopts the Cognitive theory. This theory sees the innate component not as a body of knowledge about the structure of human language, but as a substantial innate cognitive potential for processing human language to derive its structure (Lindfors, 1980). In other words, a child's innate endowment is not something already known (content), but process abilities for finding out (Lindfors, 1980). Thus, the cognitivists see the child as a contributor to his learning; that he learns through interaction with the world. Interaction here implies action (verbal and non-verbal); a doing between the child and others, as well as with objects in his environment. This means that the child's development is a two - way affair: "he is not simply shaped and molded by the environment, but he also shapes and molds it; and to some extent, controls it for his use in further learning", (Lindfors, 1980). Based on the fore - going, Bloom (1970) feels that children's utterances (especially at the early stages) can be interpreted by observing carefully the contexts in which they occur. Put in another way, childhood language is directly related to the immediate context of occurrence -described as "the here and now" (Bloom, 1970). In relevance to this paper, the child acquiring Igbo or Nigerian Pidgin does that having the innate predisposition that helps do that and having the constant interaction with competent speakers of the language(s) he is acquiring. This means that a child is an active individual who acts upon the environment in which he lives; and his capacity to learn language is a consequence of maturity (Lenneberg, 1967).

THE STAGES IN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

The process of child language development has been of great interest to psycholinguists. The major areas of concern include the clear demarcation of stages in language development and the actual strategies adopted to acquire language at each stage. However, there is a consensus to

what should be expected of the child at each stage (Ndahi, 1982). Secondly, it is a general view that the transition between one stage and another may be abrupt or gradual (Ndahi, 1982). Thirdly, the stages vary from child to child (Dale, 1976). Child language development is, all the same divided primarily into two major separate but continuous and over-lapping periods of verbal behaviour. Generally, the periods are:

- a. The Pre-Linguistic Period (the 1st day to 9 months) and
- b. The Linguistic Period (the 9th month to adolescence).

Under each stage, there are sub-stages as reviewed below.

The Linguistic Stage / True Speech

Depending on socio - cultural, psychological and neurological or other factors, a child's true speech emerges (Surakat, 2001). Generally, it is agreed, however, that the first intelligible word of a child appears just about his first birthday (Dromi; 1987). There are cases, nonetheless, where some children have their first 'meaningful' word before or after their first birthday. It depends also on the criteria established for the particular study (Surakat, 2001).

Furthermore, it is possible to have variations in determining the age when the child makes his first 'meaningful' word (McCarthy cited in Surakat, 2001). Examples of Subjects that had their first word before the first birthday include those of Bloom (1973), Greenfield and Smith (1976), Braunwald (1978), Dromi (1987), etcetera. Those after their first birthday include Bowerman's (1978) two Subjects (daughters at the 13th and 14th months).

Under the Linguistic Stage, there are three sub-stages. They are:

- i. The Holophrastic Stage/ One - word Stage,
- ii. The Two - word Stage, and
- iii. The Telegraphic Speech Stage.

The Holophrastic Stage/ One Word Stage

This stage begins by the child's 12th month (Dale, 1976); and it is when the child's sounds become associated with meanings (Mamman - KATSINA, 1992). Mamman - Katsina, 1992) holds the view that the duration of the holophrastic stage spans between 7 to 12 months, depending on individual and the environment. According to Lewis (1951), during the holophrastic stage, the child intentionally uses conventionalised sound patterns of words anticipating responses according to situations in which the sound patterns are used. As to the volume and distinctiveness of the one - word, Nelson (1973) observed that the child's words are distinctive in three aspects:

- i. Their pronunciation or phonetic forms,
- ii. Their meanings, and
- iii. The ways in which they are used.

Surakat (2001:40) sums up the general characteristics of one-word utterances under phono, morpho, semantic and pragmatic features. He states that universal sounds (e.g. /b/, /m/, /d/, etc.) are acquired before the language specific sounds, such as /θ/, /ð/, and /z/, etcetera of English. He added that the words are usually monosyllabic at the initial stages, and with consonant – vowel (CV) syllable structure, thereafter. Surakat (2001) continues that some words are, however, reduplicated syllables as in ‘ma-ma’, ‘da-da’, and etcetera.

The Two – Word Stage/Pivot Grammar

According to Mamman - Katsina (1992), the child from 24 months begins his two-word utterances that carry meaning. Here, it is only through the context of the child’s speech that meaning could be understood. Foster (1990) feels that the Two – word Stage begins when the words are combined into a single syntactic construction; and that, the stage signals the emergence of semantic development beyond the single word. He further observes that this stage coincides with the commencement of morphological development as purely grammatical function words. It is at this time that bound morphemes begin to appear.

Examples gotten from 2 years old Igbo speaking children

1. pa la
Father go

The above utterance could mean father has gone.

2. la ulo
Outside house

The above utterance could mean that she wants to go home. More of such examples include;

3. rie nri
Eat food

4. nne bia
Mother come

The Telegraphic Speech

This stage of child language development is observed when the child utters more than two words around his 3 years of birth, though with pronunciation errors. These pronunciation errors gradually reduce when the child reaches his 48th month. Lewis, however, argues that the correctness of the speech depends on the child’s reinforcement from the people with whom he comes into contact. During this stage also (sometime from the Two – word Stage), the child’s speech has what Brown (1973:222) calls “less crucial words” – especially those that can safely be omitted in a telegram and yet convey the message.

Examples from 3 to 4 years old Igbo children

1. Mma lota ulor
Mother come home

‘Mother came back home’

2. Woke ahu biara
Man that came
‘That man came’

Examples of the children’s frequent words are given below in English:

NOUNS: a Persons: Mma, Nne (mother), Ulor(house), Nri(food)

VERBS: Lota (came),

MODIFIERS: that

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the observational studies subsumed under the qualitative research design was adopted. According to Ihejirika and Omego (2011), qualitative research design “are interpretative in nature, that is, they attempt to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 69). The author in trying to collect the primary data used a wordlist of 20 words both for Igbo and Nigerian Pidgin. The secondary data were gathered by consulting both online of offline libraries for relevant materials to aid the work.

The author made use of self-designed wordlist of 20 words. This wordlist was presented in form of interview to 6 children – 3 for Igbo and 3 for Nigerian Pidgin. For the children acquiring both Nigerian Pidgin and Igbo the author interviewed and observed 2, 3, and 5 years old children respectively. Other instruments that were used were: Wavepad recorder on iPhone 6s Plus. Also, notebook and pen were utilized efficiently to put down as well as transcribe the languages consultants’ speech. In order to ascertain whether the respondents could attach meaning to words the children were made to demonstrate by pointing to the part of the body or the object (where present).

DISCUSSION

The data gotten would be classified based on the ages of the children as well as the language they acquired. Therefore, discussions under this section were done under the following headings: Morpho-Semantic Analysis of the Speech of Children 2-5 years Acquiring Igbo and Nigerian Pidgin, The Morpho-Semantic Analysis of the Speech of a 2-Year Old Child Acquiring Igbo, The Morpho-Semantic Analysis of the Speech of a 3-Year Old Child Acquiring Igbo, The Morpho-Semantic Analysis of the Speech of a 5-Year Old Child Acquiring Igbo, The Morpho-Semantic Analysis of the Speech of a 2-Year Old Child Acquiring Nigerian Pidgin, The Morpho-Semantic Analysis of the Speech of a 3-Year Old Child Acquiring Nigerian Pidgin, The Morpho-Semantic Analysis of the Speech of a 5-Year Old Child Acquiring Nigerian Pidgin and conclusion.

Morpho-Semantic Analysis of the Speech of Children 2-5 years Acquiring Igbo and Nigerian Pidgin

This section focused on analyzing the morpho-semantic implication of the speech of the children from 2 years of age up to those of 5 years acquiring Igbo and Nigerian Pidgin respectively. Practically, we looked at the way the 2-year old child produced words, the way the 3-year old child produced the same words as well as the 5-year old child acquiring the above mentioned languages respectively. Also, the semantic implication of what they uttered were also taken into study; hence, whether they could assign meaning to the words they produced not minding whether those words were produced in an immature way was the main concern of this paper.

The Morpho-Semantic Analysis of the Speech of a 2-Year Old Child Acquiring Igbo

Table 1: The Speech of a 2-Year Old Child Acquiring Igbo

English gloss	2 years old	Adult
Eye	/ája/	ápa
Nose	/imi/	Ímí
Mouth	/onú/	onū
Hand	/átá/	áká
Leg	/útú/	úkwú
Ear	/itì/	ntì
Teeth	/éze/	éze
Tongue	/iji/	írí
Buttocks	/itè/	íkè
Hair	/ítí/	ntìtì
Plates	/étéjé/	éfére
Clothes	-	ákwà
Shoe	-	ákpúkpúkwú
Chair	-	óché
Bed	-	àkwà
Water	míjí	mímírí
Food	íjí	nrí
Light	ótú	òkwú
Sun	áwú	ánwú

The above table reveals that the 2 years old child acquiring Igbo could produce words in the language although less accurate when compared with the speech of a competent adult speaker of the same language. As can be quickly observed in the table above, the 2-year-old child produced the word /qna/ as /aja/ ‘eye’ thereby producing the voiced palatal nasal [ɲ] as voiced palatal approximant [j]. This is the case of substitution amount from denasalisation. Another case is found in the word /ok^wo/ which the child produced as /oto/ ‘leg’. Here, the 2-year-old child substituted the labialized voiceless velar plosive [k^w] for voiceless alveolar plosive [t]. The same error occurred in ‘buttocks’ /íkè/ produced /ítè/. /iri/ was produced as /iji/ ‘tongue’ /nri/ produced as /iji/. The case of ‘plate’ is slightly different in the sense that the child the voiceless labio-dental fricative [f] is strengthened to become the voiceless alveolar plosive [t] as in /efere/ produced as /eteje/. here, the child replaced the alveolar trill [r] with palatal approximant [j]. From the above data, it can be observed that the 2-year-old child acquiring Igbo was committing substitution error.

Also, from the table 1 above, it is observed that apart from deleting initial bilabial nasal [m] in ‘water’ the child could not produce the words /ák^wà/ ‘cloth’ /ákpókópók^wò/ ‘shoe’, /ótǽ/ ‘chair’ and /àk^wà/ ‘bed’. There was also the case of denasalisation in the words /nri/ produced as /iri/ and /áŋ^wó/ produced as /áwó/ for ‘sun’.

Also, semantically, something can be observed in the word ‘hair’ /ńtiti/ which the child realized as /ífi/ which means ‘head’. Here, there is what is regarded as over-extension of meaning. The child assumed that every other thing that is attached to the head was called head. This implies that the child is still developing semantically.

The Morpho-Semantic Analysis of the Speech of a 3-Year Old Child Acquiring Igbo

Table 2: The Speech of a 3-Year Old Child Acquiring Igbo

English gloss	3 years old	Adult
Eye	ájá	áǵá
Nose	ímí	ímí
Mouth	onú	onū
Hand	áká	áká
Leg	úkú	úkwú
Ear	ńtì	ńtì
Teeth	éze	éze
Tongue	írí	írí
Buttocks	íkè	íkè
Hair	ífi	ńtiti
Plates	éfére	éfére
Clothes	ákà	ákwà
Shoe	ápúúkú	ákpúkúpúúkú

Table	-	
Chair	ófě	ófě
Bed	àkà	àkwà
Water	mírí	mímírí
Food	ńrí	ńrí
Light	ókú	ókú
Sun	áwú	áṅwú

Table 2 above reveals that the 3 years old child acquiring Igbo could produce words in the language in a way similar to the speech of the 2-year-old child, as observed in the way the child produced the following words: /aja/ ‘eye’, /imi/ ‘nose’, /ɔnɔ/ ‘mouth’, /miri/ ‘water’, etc. However, there is noticeable improvement in the way the child produced those words containing the voiceless velar plosive [k] and that with initial syllabic nasal (alveolar nasal [n]) as in the words /ókú/ ‘leg’, /íkè/ ‘buttocks’, /ókú/ and the word /ńrí/ ‘food’ as opposed to /útó/ ‘leg’, /ítè/ ‘buttocks’, /ótó/ and /írí/ ‘food’.

Another noticeable improvement in the developmental milestones is that the 3-year-old child acquiring Igbo could produce some of the words which the 2-year-old child acquiring the same language could not pronounce, although less accurate when compared with the speech of the 5-year-old child. A very good example from the table is the word /ákpókúk̄w̄/ ‘shoe’ which the 3-year-old child produced as /ápók̄w̄/. it is better than the 2-year-old child who could produce the word but less accurate compared to that of the 5-year-old child because of the deletion of the third syllable [-k̄w̄-] from the beginning of the word. Jones G. I. AYUWO, *Ph.D*

Semantically, it is observed that the 3-year old child acquiring Igbo could attach meaning to lexical items because just like the 2-year old child he readily pointed to the part of the body or the object (where present) as he was pronouncing the word. However, the 3-year old child has not completely perfected his semantic development. This is because, just as in the case of the 2-year old child, the 3-year old child was still observed calling /ńtiti/ ‘hair’ /íjí/ which means ‘head’. That is to say that he still committed the semantic error of over-extension of meaning.

The Morpho-Semantic Analysis of the Speech of a 5-Year Old Child Acquiring Igbo

Table 3: The Speech of a 5-Year Old Child Acquiring Igbo

Gloss	5 years old	Adult
Eye	áná	áná
Nose	ímí	ímí
Mouth	ɔnú	ɔnū
Hand	áká	áká
Leg	úkú	úkwú
Ear	ńtì	ńtì

Teeth	ézá	ézá
Tongue	írí	írí
Buttocks	íkè	íkè
Hair	íḡí	ńtiti
Plates	éfééré	éfééré
Clothes	ákwà	ákwà
Shoe	ápúpúúkú	ákpúkpúúkú
Table	-	
Chair	ófé	ófé
Bed	-	àkwà
Water	ímírí	ímírí
Food	írí	ńrí
Light	ókú	ókú
Sun	owá	áḡwú

From the above table, it can be observed that the 5-year child was already producing speech that is similar to that of the adult Igbo speaker unlike the 2 years old case in Igbo. Virtually all the words were produced in the way a competent adult Igbo speaker will produce them except for words such as: /ok^wo/ which the child realizes as /ok/ 'leg'. Here, the child disregarded the secondary articulation feature present in the voiceless velar plosive (i.e. labialization) [k^w] as he attempted to unround the close-mid back rounded vowel [o]. The other words were 'shoe' /ákpúkpúók^wo/ which the child produced as /ápúpúók/ and 'sun' / áḡwú/ being realized as /owá/. In the word shoe the child produced the voiceless labia-velar plosive [kp] as voiceless bilabial plosive [p]; and the word 'sun' which is produced as /áḡ^wo/ was produced as /owá/. We also the word 'water' produced as /ímírí/ thereby bringing about denasalisation.

Just like the case of the 2 and 3 years old children, the 5-year-old child has not completely perfected his semantic development. Semantically, it can be observed that 'hair' /ńtiti/ which the child realized as /íḡí/ which means 'head'. Here, there is what is regarded as over-extension of meaning. The child assumed that every other thing that is attached to the head was called head. This implies that the child is still developing semantically.

The Morpho-Semantic Analysis of the Speech of a 2-Year Old Child Acquiring Nigerian Pidgin

Table 4: The Speech of a 2-Year Old Child Acquiring Nigerian Pidgin

Gloss	2-Year Old Child	Adult
Eye	/aɪ/	/aɪ/
Nose	/nozu/	/noz/
Mouth	/mat/	/maʊt/
Hand	/han/	/hand/
Leg	/jeg/	/leg

Ear	/jɑ/	/ija/
Teeth	/tit/	/tit/
Tongue	/tɔŋgu/	/tɔŋgɹ/
Buttocks	/jæf/	/bɔmbɔm/
Hair	/hɛ:t/	/hɛ:/
Plates	/pjɛt/	/plet/
Cloth	/kijɔt/	/klɔt/
Shoe	/ʃu:/	/ʃu/
Table	/tɛbɔ/	/tebu/
Chair	/tʃɑ/	/tʃiɑ/
Bed	/beti/	/bed/
Water	/atɑ/	/wɔta/
Food	/fudu/	/fud/
Light	/laɪt/	/laɪt/
Sun	/ʃɔn/	/sɔn/

From the above table, it can be observed that the 2-year-old child acquiring Nigerian Pidgin could produce words in the language although less accurate when compared with the speech of a competent adult speaker of the same language. As can be quickly observed in the table above, the 2 year old child produced the word ‘mouth’ /mat/ which is realized as /maʊt/, ‘hand’ /han/ which is produced as /hand/ by adult speakers ‘leg’ /jeg/ is realized as /jeg/ by the 2-year old child, ‘ear’ //jɑ/ which ordinarily is realized as /ija/ by the adult speaker, ‘plate’ /pjɛt/ which the adult speaker realizes as /plet/ the child produced ‘cloth’ /kijɔt/, etc. form the above examples, it can be observed that the 2-year old speaker of Nigerian Pidgin readily shortened diphthongs as in /aʊ/ in ‘mouth’. the 2-year child either deleted the final consonant or replaced it with the its voiceless counterpart /t/ as /hɛ:t/ for /hɛd/, /beti/ for /bed/, etc. it can also be noticed that the child added /ɪ/ after /t/ in the word ‘bed’.

Jones G. I. AYUWO, *Ph.D*

The case of gliding is common in the 2-year old speech, where for instance, /lɛg/ is produced as /jɛg/ ‘leg’, /plet/ is produced as /pjɛt/ for ‘plate’, /klɔt/ is realized as //kijɔt/ for ‘cloth’. In the examples above, the alveolar lateral [l] is replaced with [j] after the close-mid vowel has been added to break the consonant cluster. The addition of a vowel is also noticed in the words: /noz/ produced /nozu/ by the 2-year old child for ‘nose’, ‘tongue’ / tɔŋg/ is realized as /tɔŋgu/, ‘food’ which the adult speaker of Nigerian Pidgin produces as /fud/ is realized as /fudu/ by the 2-year old speaker; thereby inserting the close back rounded vowel [u] at the final position.

From all the observations noted above, it is clear that there are cases of error of substitution as in [l] substituted with [j], omission as in [w] and [ɪ] omitted initially in ‘water’ and ‘ear’ respectively, [d] omitted finally. Also, the case of addition as found in [ɪ] and [ʊ] added medially and/or finally in ‘food’, ‘bed’, ‘plate’, etc.

Also, semantically, something can be observed in the word ‘hair’ /hɛ/ which the child realized as /hɛt/ or /hɛtɪ/ which ordinarily means ‘head’. Here, there is what is regarded as over-extension of meaning. The child assumed that every other thing that is attached to the head was called head. This implies that the child is still developing semantically. This is also a kind of vocabulary variation as a result of age difference. The 2-year old child called ‘buttocks’ /ɲæf/ as opposed to /bɔmbɔm/ as was the case with the 3 and 5 years’ children.

The Morpho-Semantic Analysis of the Speech of a 3-Year Old Child Acquiring Nigerian Pidgin

Table 5: The Speech of a 3-Year Old Child Acquiring Nigerian Pidgin

Gloss	3-year old Child	Adult
Eye	/aɪ/	/aɪ/
Nose	/noz/	/noz/
Mouth	/mɔt/	/mɔt/
Hand	/hand/	/hand/
Leg	/lɛg/	/lɛg/
Ear	/ɪjɑ/	/ɪjɑ/
Teeth	/tit/	/tit/
Tongue	/tɔŋgɔ/	/tɔŋg/
Buttocks	/bɔmbɔm/	/bɔmbɔm/
Hair	/hɛ:/	/hɛ:/
Plates	/plet/	/plet/
Clothes	/klɔt/	/klɔt/
Shoe	/ʃu/	/ʃu/
Table	/tebu/	/tebu/
Chair	/tʃiɑ/	/tʃiɑ/
Bed	/bɛd/	/bɛd/
Water	/wɔtɑ/	/wɔtɑ/
Food	/fud/	/fud/
Light	/laɪt /	/laɪt/
Sun	/sɔn/	/sɔn/

From the above table, it can be observed that the 3-year child was already producing speech that is similar to that of the adult Nigerian Pidgin speaker unlike the 2 years old case in the same language. Virtually all the words were produced in the way a competent adult Nigerian Pidgin speaker would produce them except for the word ‘tongue’ which the child realized as //tɔŋgɔ/ as opposed to /tɔŋg/ in the adult speech. Here, the close-mid back rounded vowel [ɔ] is added at the final position of the word; hence, amounting to what is regarded as error of addition.

Another noticeable difference is found in the word ‘water’ which the 3-year old child realized as /wɔ́tá/ as opposed to /wòtá/. The difference is that in the speech of the 3-year old child, the tone is HL while for the adult speaker the tone is LH.

The Morpho-Semantic Analysis of the Speech of a 5-Year Old Child Acquiring Nigerian Pidgin

Table 6: The Speech of a 5-Year Old Child Acquiring Nigerian Pidgin

Gloss	5-year old Child	Adult
Eye	/aɪ/	/aɪ/
Nose	/noz/	/noz/
Mouth	/maʊt/	/maʊt/
Hand	/hand/	/hand/
Leg	/lɛg	/lɛg
Ear	/ɪjə/	/ɪjə/
Teeth	/tit/	/tit/
Tongue	/tɒŋgʊ/	/tɒŋgʊ/
Buttocks	/bɒmbɒm/	/bɒmbɒm/
Hair	/hɛ:/	/hɛ:/
Plates	/bɛd/	/bɛd/
Clothes	/plɛt/	/plɛt/
Shoe	/ʃu/	/ʃu/
Table	/tebu/	/tebu/
Chair	/tʃɪə/	/tʃɪə/
Bed	/wɔtə/	/wɔtə/
Water	/fud/	/fud/
Food	/laɪt/	/laɪt/
Light	/sɒn/	/sɒn/
Sun	/klɒt/	/klɒt/

From the above table, it can be observed that the 3-year child was already producing speech that is similar to that of the adult Nigerian Pidgin speaker unlike the 2 years old case in the same language. Virtually all the words were produced in the way a competent adult Nigerian Pidgin speaker would produce them.

CONCLUSIONS

This study was set out to examine the morpho-semantic analysis of two to five years old children acquiring Igbo and Nigerian Pidgin respectively. Previous studies had shown among other

features that children especially those within 2 to 3 tend to commit much error in their attempt to produce meaningful speech. These errors have mainly been categorized into four and given the acronym SODA – Substitution, Omission, Distortion and Addition.

Contrary to the findings of previous studies, it is revealed that the children acquiring the Nigerian Pidgin produce the final consonant as in /bɛtɪ/ although in a distorted manner. However, the same could not be established for Igbo since it is not a consonant final language. Also, the alveolar lateral [l] is replaced with [j] after the close-mid vowel has been added to break the consonants cluster. The addition of a vowel is also noticed in the words: /noz/ produced /nozu/ by the 2-year old child for ‘nose’, ‘tongue’ / tɔŋg/ is realized as /tɔŋgu/, ‘food’ which the adult speaker of the Nigerian Pidgin produces.

In all, what is stable is that there are observable differences in the speech of 2 years’ children acquiring language when compared to that of 3 and 5 years’ children acquiring Igbo and Pidgin respectively. The 3 years’ children tend to be more adult-like in their speech when compared with the 2 years’ children; and the 5 years’ children also tend to be more adult-like in their speech when compared with 3 years’ children acquiring Igbo. For the children acquiring Nigerian Pidgin, there is practically no noticeable difference between the adult speech and that of 5 years’ children. Could this be agreeing with the **Baby-Talk Theory** about the origin of Pidgin?

Semantically, this paper concludes that children from 2 to 5 years’ attach meaning to lexical items, although at a varying degree. This is established in the case where the 2 years’ children both for Igbo and the Nigerian Pidgin pointed to their **head** to mean **hair**. Also, the study reveals a kind of vocabulary variation as a result of age difference. The 2-year old child called ‘buttocks’ /jæʃ/ as opposed to /bɔmbɔm/ as was the case with the 3 and 5 years’ children.

Another striking finding was the ability of children from 2 to 5 years in both languages to use non-verbal means to communicate. A good instance is when the children were asked the question: “Have you eaten?” they responded by nodding their head at first before they were told to say it. This was the same for both languages.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the findings of the present study, it is therefore recommended that further studies be carried out to determine the variation between the speech of 4 years and that of 5 years Igbo and the Nigerian Pidgin acquiring children. Also, further study should be conducted to do a syntactic analysis of 2-5 years Nigerian Pidgin and Igbo acquiring children with a view to establishing their differences.

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