

# Micro and Macro Language Inputs In Children Language Acquisition:A Case of Alifia's First Language Acquisition

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*Abstrak: Artikel ini didasarkan pada sebuah penelitian dan dimaksudkan untuk menjelaskan bagaimana masukan bahasa mikro dan makro berkontribusi dan berpengaruh terhadap pemerolehan bahasa pertama anak. Subyek penelitian adalah seorang bocah bernama Alifia dan data yang disajikan di dalam artikel ini direkam dan dicatat sejak dia berusia 2 – 3,5 tahun. Data dikumpulkan melalui interaksi verbal langsung, perekaman, dan pencatatan. Menjelang Alifia berusia dua setengah tahun, masukan bahasa yang diberikan oleh anggota keluarga inti sangat menentukan bahasa pertama yang diperoleh si anak. Karena keluarga inti menggunakan bahasa Indonesia dengan si anak, maka anak tersebut juga merespon dengan bahasa Indonesia. Dengan kata lain, pada usia ini masukan bahasa mikro berkontribusi banyak terhadap pemerolehan bahasa pertama si anak. Ketika si anak sudah berusia tiga tahun dan bergaul dengan teman sebaya dan orang lain yang menggunakan bahasa Minangkabau, maka bahasa Indonesia si anak mulai bercampur dengan bahasa Minangkabau. Dia mulai menggunakan campur kode walaupun bahasa utamanya tetap bahasa Indonesia. Pada usia ini masukan bahasa makro memberikan kontribusi yang berarti terhadap perkembangan bahasa si anak. Berdasarkan penelitian ini dapat disimpulkan bahwa perkembangan bahasa pertama anak dipengaruhi oleh masukan bahasa yang dia terima.*

*Kata kunci: masukan bahasa mikro, masukan bahasa makro, pemerolehan bahasa pertama*

## INTRODUCTION

The phenomena of first language acquisition have always been interesting and challenging topics of discussion in psycholinguistic studies. The studies in developmental psycholinguistics describe many amazing stages of children's language acquisition. They were born with no language forms, but they are naturally and psychologically able to acquire their first language in short time. By

the age of three to four years, children naturally speak and understand, at least, one language as their first language. Although they do not actively and completely create their first language at the stage, they have got the language faculty as human beings.

The studies of children's first language acquisition can be based on three broad areas, namely: methodology, description, and explanation (Ingram, 1989: 1). By methodology, the researchers progressively develop the scientific ways in which one decides to approach the data of language acquisition. Then, description means that it is the factual description about the characteristics and types of child language which is full of children's linguistic behavior. Through explanation, the researchers develop and construct the theories of language acquisition, and language development, as well. Further development of the studies leads linguists and psychologists to have neurolinguistics. In addition, the studies of children's language acquisition or linguistic development may be conducted in order to see the influences of non-linguistic factors, such as socio-cultural factors.

That language has interrelationships with society, culture, and mind has been claimed by linguists. In linguistic relativity theory and Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, for example, it is argued that some elements of language, such as vocabulary or grammatical systems, influence speakers' perceptions and can affect their attitudes and behavior. It is also strongly stated that language is ultimately directive in this process. A review of the writings of Sapir and Whorf indicates that neither thought of the relationships among language, culture, and human thinking as rigid and mechanistic but, rather, as coexisting in fluid and dynamic interactions (see Bonvillain, 1997: 51 – 52). Based on these, the language inputs mentally processed by children during their first period of language acquisition are naturally assumed as the interactions between socio-cultural factors and psychological factors of language.

The first language acquisition at the initial periods of children age belongs to natural processes of language learning. Children are actively involved in the mental and natural processes in the acquisition, production, understanding, and memorizing the language. The acquisition processes are amazing and full of internal-psychological phenomena in humans' mind. The studies in this field need linguistic and psychological bases, and neurological analysis, as well. The data and subjects of study should be in clear control and they should be in the case of longitudinal observations. It needs serious works and analyses with appropriate theoretical bases.

It is impossible to study all phenomena of children language acquisition or children language development in one occasion or in short time because there are so many linguistic and non-linguistic factors involved. In accordance with these,

language inputs can be originally regarded as a linguistic factor in human language acquisition. Language inputs are those which belong to any forms of language heard and mentally processed by humans' mind in their daily life. The language inputs may be naturally influenced by environments and intentionally managed by close counterparts and people. In this sense, the language inputs can be classified as micro and macro language inputs. The term macro language inputs, in this article, refer to the language inputs given and influenced by macro environment and society in which one lives. The term micro language inputs refer to the language inputs given and influenced by micro environment or specific family members. In order to have better understanding and reasonable description in the study, this article limits the discussion on how the macro and micro language inputs influence children (first) language acquisition.

The phenomena of children language acquisition are mostly related to human first language acquisition; it is the first language acquisition possessed by children at the early period of life. However, it does not mean that the process of language acquisition does not take place at the next periods of human age. The studies on children language acquisition may give scientific contributions to the theories of human language acquisition. In addition, the description and conclusion derived from the data collected can be useful in order to have better description and explanation on language acquisition phenomena in general and on children first language acquisition in particular. Accordingly, the writer tries to describe and analyze psycholinguistically how macro and micro language inputs contribute to and influence the condition of the first language acquisition of children at the first three years of age. The subject of this study was a young child named Alifia; the data presented in this article were recorded and noted since she was 2 years old till she was 3 years 6 months old. To be more specific, the analysis and discussion of this article are intended to answer the question: *How do macro and micro language inputs contribute to and influence Alifia's first language acquisition during the age of 2 – 3:6 years old?*

The main aim of the study is to describe and to explain how the macro and micro language inputs contribute to and influence a child language acquisition during the age of 2 – 3:6 years old, in this case, Alifia's first language acquisition. The analysis and the discussion toward the data in this article were scientifically based on the relevant psycholinguistic theories, particularly those of the first language acquisition. As the supporting points, the theories on language learning and relevant theories on language and culture were selectively referred to, as well. The discussion and the results of analysis are presented in descriptive-argumentative exposition. The data presented in this article were academically

selected based on recorded and noted corpus of data during the time of limited-participant observation.

## **METHOD AND TECHNIQUE OF THE STUDY**

### **The Design and Type of Study**

This article was written as a report of a limited-scientific work on the study of a young child first language acquisition. The study was designed as a descriptive-qualitative study in the type of limited-longitudinal research (semi-longitudinal research) (see Gay and Airasian, 2000: 279 – 280; Gay, Mills, and Airasian, 2009: 176 – 177). The term limited-longitudinal or semi-longitudinal research was intentionally used because the execution of the research was not fully accommodated the ideal principles of longitudinal research as they are used in psycholinguistics or in neurolinguistics. The limitations were in the allocation of time, in the depth and participant observations applied, and in the number of data recorded and noted. However, the main principles of conducting a longitudinal research were basically followed.

### **Subject, Participants, and Data of the Study**

The subject of this study was a young child named Alifia; she was born on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007 in Agam, West Sumatera (She was 3:6 years when the study was conducted). Since she was born, her parents, grandfather, and close people in the family tried to use *bahasa Indonesia* (of course in Minangkabaunese style) to communicate with Alifia. Theoretically, it can be stated that *bahasa Indonesia* was Alifia's first language. Therefore, in addition to Alifia as the subject of this study, her parents and other close related people in her environment were the participants in this study. The language data, the macro and micro language inputs, used and produced by the subjects and the participants of this study were the data, then. All language inputs (language forms, uses and meanings) given and used by people outside Alifia's family are called *macro language inputs*, while those given and used by Alifia's family (parents, grandfather, uncles, and aunts) are classified into *micro language inputs* (see Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1993: 114 – 139; Ingram, 1989: 77 – 79).

### **Method and Technique of Data Collection**

This limited-longitudinal study on Alifia's first language acquisition was conducted during 1 year and six months; beginning from the time when Alifia was 2 years till she was 3:6 years. The method used in collecting the data was participant observation in the design of limited-longitudinal method (see Larsen-

Freeman and Long, 1993: 15 – 17; Gay and Airasian, 2000; Gay, Mills, and Airasian, 2009). Practically, the techniques used in collecting the data were direct-verbal interaction, recording, and note taking. In accordance with this, the instruments used in this study were tape recorder, note taking equipments, and the writer herself. The single uses and/or combination of the techniques were considered in such a way that the data of the study were reasonably obtained. The recorded data were transcribed phonetically and orthographically. The data in the forms of orthography were directly used as the written data.

### **Method and Technique of Data Analysis**

Generally, descriptive-argumentative analysis was used in order to have the results and conclusion of the study. Then, qualitative-descriptive explanation was also used as the report of data analysis in the form of focused description (see Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1993: 17). In practical ways, elicitation, semantic, performance, and discourse analyses based on psycholinguistic theories were used as the techniques of data analyses (see Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1993: 26 – 28, 56 – 71). In addition, the cultural analysis related to the relationships between language, culture, and mind (thought) were included, as well as the supporting technique of data analysis (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1993: 114 – 139). The results of data analysis are exposed in the form of descriptive-argumentative explanation (see Seliger and Shohamy, 1989: 243 – 250).

### **BRIEF REVIEW OF RELATED THEORIES**

#### **Children's First Language Acquisition**

The studies on children's first language acquisition concern with many psycholinguistic terms, concepts, and theories. Linguists attempt to classify and specify the scopes of psycholinguistic studies in such a way that they may obtain clear and scientific data of human language development. Children's language development and children's first language acquisition are simultaneously discussed in Developmental Psycholinguistics. Scovel (2001: 7) says that it is not a surprise that the ability of children to pick up their mother tongue (first language; L1) so quickly and seemingly so easily is the central concern of the first major sub-field of the psychology of language. Related to this, developmental psycholinguistics examines how speech emerges over time and how children go about constructing the complex structures of their mother tongue.

The studies of language acquisition are progressively involved in the discussion of human language development. According to Ingram (1989: 2), the

discussion of the descriptive aspects of language acquisition is conducted by a presentation of the traditional periods of acquisition: (i) prelinguistic development – birth to end of first year; (ii) single-word utterances – from around 1 year to 1.5 years of age; (iii) the first word combinations – from around 1.5 to 2 years of age; (iv) simple and complex sentences – the third year of life. In details, Scovel (2001: 8 – 16) describes the stages of child language development as: (i) crying (iconic, symbolic); (ii) cooing; (iii) babbling (marginal babbling, canonical babbling, segmental and suprasegmental phoneme); (iv) first word; and (v) first grammar.

Historically, language acquisition has concentrated on the theory of language, while child language has concentrated on the theory of acquisition. The theory of acquisition will have two distinct components. One will be the set of principles that lead to the construction of the grammar, i.e. those that concern the child's grammar or linguistic competence. These principles will deal with how the child constructs a rule of grammar and changes it over time. The focus is on the nature of the child's rule system; it is concerned with competence factors. The second component looks at the psychological processes the child uses in learning the language. These are what some linguists call performance factors (Ingram, 1989: 64).

The human language development (child language development) can be briefly outlined in the major milestones of language development on separate time lines for each language components. From birth to 1 year, children change in the sounds they produce and in the communicativeness of their behavior. By 6 months, children recognize their name and by 8 to 10 months children begin to understand a few words, but for most children there is very little productive speech before 1 year. During the second year, the most obvious development is in the domain of vocabulary. Children typically begin this year by producing their first word, and by the end of the year they have a productive vocabulary of 300 words and are producing word combinations. During the third year of life, the most obvious development is children's increasing mastery of the grammar of their language. The period from 3 to 4 is largely one of refining and further developing the skills that are already in place. The most obvious new development occurs in the area of grammar, where children start to produce complex, multiclausal sentences (see Hoff, 2006: 3 – 5; Steinberg et al., 2001: 1).

Related to the child language development, children's first language acquisition is naturally involved in the stages. This idea is parallel with the general concepts of first language (L1). According to Stern (1994: 11), the first language is a language acquired first in early childhood. Then, L1 is also referred to as a language of dominant or preferred use. The first definition of L1 sounds psychological one, while the second one is more on socio-cultural definition.

Another term that has similar sense with the first language is native language. In this sense, the native language is a language of early-childhood acquisition and 'primary language' or the language of dominant or preferred use. So, the term native language combines the two concepts of L1. In this article, the term first language refers to the first definition.

First language acquisition occurs in the early stage of children and it belongs to natural and subconscious processes in mastering native or first language. There is a distinction between language learning and language acquisition. Based on Krashen's, Stern (1994: 403 – 404) describes that language learning is an explicit processes, while language acquisition is an implicit one. Theoretically, language learning can also be stated as a conscious process, and language acquisition is more subconscious. Steinberg et. al. (2001: 211) add that second language acquisition is said to involve a kind of inductive process similar to that which occurs in the acquisition of the native language. Such a process is claimed to be automatic and unconscious.

### **The Linguistic Environment for Language Acquisition: Macro and Micro Language Inputs**

Language is both psychological and socio-cultural phenomena; it has internal and external factors of humans. Related to children's first language acquisition, the language development is influenced by internal and external factors of infants. In accordance with this, Bonvillain (1997: 217) illustrates that an infant is surrounded by people who make gestures, movement, and noise. The child becomes aware of distinctions between herself and others and develops desires to interact with those others. In some unconscious manner, she gradually grasps the notion that the behaviors and noises that people make have meaning, that they are purposeful and useful in social interactions. Young children cannot consult dictionaries or grammar books; they have to construct their own set of rules. In a sense, children are the best linguists, analyzing an unknown language and discovering its grammar based solely on evidence presented by experience. Children develop knowledge of their language through unfolding and maturing cognitive and linguistic abilities internal to themselves while they are helped by their parents or caregivers, who, in various ways, provide social contexts where these abilities become focused and meaningful.

The phenomena of children's language acquisition can also be seen as the process of nurture (innate) and nature (learned from experience). Although the idea that human language is nurture or nature is debatable, it can be argued that children's language acquisition works naturally as the combination of the two

processes (see Hoff, 2005: 15; Dardjowidjojo, 2005: 234 – 235). Related to children's language development as the nurture and nature processes, it can be stated that the linguistic inputs obtained and mentally processed by infants may be internal and external inputs. The internal inputs are those created and produced by the children internally, while the external inputs are given by people in their environment.

The linguistic environments for children's first language acquisition could be seen from the concepts of competence and performance proposed by Chomsky. The human infant must be endowed with a highly sophisticated innate ability to learn language. To learn the rules of its mother tongue from natural speech, the young child could apparently do what the adult linguist could not; induce the rules of a grammar from performance data. Children could not possibly be using their native-speaker intuitions to do this, because they were not yet native speakers. The children heard surface structure, but in some cases they were not able to learn 'deep structure' (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1993: 114 – 115). It is surprising that children use all types of linguistic inputs as their language inputs from linguistic and non-linguistic environment. They are able to do it naturally and psychologically.

Children subconsciously grasp all language inputs from any source of linguistic environments in order to learn and master their first language. The language inputs are the language forms and meanings exposed by people in their environment which are acquired and understood by children. The acquisition of the first language occurs, particularly, at the early ages of children. The language inputs of first language acquisition may be given by socio-cultural environment (society) and by small-family people (core-family members). There is, of course, the natural and psychological interrelationship between language, society, culture, and thought (see Bonvillain, 1997; Darnell in Jourdan and Tuite (eds.), 2006). These language inputs belong to the external linguistic environment; they come from the outside sources of the children. In this article, the language inputs in the children language acquisition given by people in large society are called *macro language inputs*. Then, the language inputs in the children language acquisition given by core-family members are referred as *micro language inputs*.

So far, the phenomena of children's first language acquisition are mostly discussed in psycholinguistics or in neurolinguistics. The idea is academically reasonable because language acquisition process is commonly assigned as the subject matter of psychological aspects of human language. However, to see the language acquisition as the socio-cultural phenomenon is not questioned anymore. The language inputs and other language events in daily life are not solely the internal aspects of humans. They are the socio-cultural aspects, as well.



Consequently, it is also necessary to see the psychological influences of macro and micro language inputs, as socio-cultural phenomena, in children's first language acquisition. This article discusses how the macro and micro language inputs give effects and determine the first language acquisition of children, in this case Alifia's first language acquisition.

Language inputs (macro and micro inputs) given by people around children through social interaction have fundamental roles in language acquisition. Fromkin et. al. (1990: 367 – 368) tell that it should not be forgotten, though, that from the moment of birth a child is amongst others; from that moment the child's interaction begins with other human beings. Halliday (in Fromkin et. al., 1990) describes early language development in terms of children's progressive mastery of, and subsequent generalization of, a number of uses or functions of language. They use language to fulfill these functions as their needs and intentions dictate in the continuing process of interaction between themselves and other human beings. Children develop a meaning potential for interpreting the environment in terms of their own experience (observing, recalling, reacting, predicting, and so on).

## **DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION**

### **Language Environment of the Subject in this Study: A Brief Description**

The subject of this study was a young child named Alifia. She was born on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007 in a kampong in Tilatang Kamang sub-regency of Agam, West Sumatera. The kampong is about 10 kilometers northern Bukittinggi; it is a country-side kampong in West Sumatera. Alifia was born and lives in Minangkabaunese culture and society; the main native language used in the society is Minangkabaunese. No single family in neighboring houses use pure or real *bahasa Indonesia* or other local languages in their daily communication. Her core-family naturally and actually uses Minangkabaunese as the interactive language.

At the age of 5 – 6 months, Alifia's parents initiated to use *bahasa Indonesia* as the interactive language (it seemed that the *bahasa Indonesia* used in Minangkabaunese style). Her father and mother preferred *bahasa Indonesia* in verbal interaction in such a way that the communication with the infant occurred in the national language. The language inputs preferred by Alifia's parents were also followed by the other members of the core-family (her grandfather, uncle, and aunts). They used *bahasa Indonesia* to communicate in simple ways to the young child at any occasion of verbal interaction. When Alifia was 1 year old, her mother picked her up to a school environment where she worked as an

administrative staff. In the school environment, most people used *bahasa Indonesia* in having verbal interaction with the young child. The use of *bahasa Indonesia* to communicate with her has taken place till today. However, this study just observed, recorded, and took notes the language acquisition phenomena when the subject of this study was 2 – 3:6 years old.

Based on the description above, there are four main points that can be assigned related to the phenomena of children first language acquisition (in this case Alifia's first language acquisition). Firstly, Alifia was born and live in Minangkabau socio-cultural environment. People around her speak and behave each other in Minangkabau but when her core-family members spoke to her, they use *bahasa Indonesia*. Secondly, in specific verbal interaction, Alifia obtained and mentally processed the language inputs in *bahasa Indonesia*. Theoretically, Alifia grasped and acquired the language inputs in *bahasa Indonesia* (given by core-family members as the micro language inputs). Thirdly, it can be said that Alifia's first language was *bahasa Indonesia*; the first language processed and mentally comprehended was *bahasa Indonesia*. Fourthly, the young child used *bahasa Indonesia* as the first language, particularly in the interaction among core-family. In addition to these language conditions, it is also believed that she naturally heard and mentally processed a few language inputs in Minangkabau given by other people out of the core-family members (as the macro language inputs).

### **The Contribution of Macro and Micro Language Inputs during 2 – 3 Years Old**

It has been mentioned above that this study tries to describe and explain how macro and micro language inputs contributed and affected the first language acquisition of children by observing the case of Alifia's first language acquisition. By macro language inputs, the writer refers to all language inputs coming from the people in society out of the members of the core-family. Then, the micro language inputs were those given by the members of the core-family of the subject in this study. As a matter of fact, the pre-observation and pre-study had been conducted before Alifia was 2 years old. However, the actual study was done when she was 2 – 3:6 years old. Such working process took place in order to be more specific in the case of words and first grammar acquisition of children. So, this study did not talk about sounds, phonemes or suprasegmental phonemes acquisition.

When Alifia was 2 years old, she began to produce and understood words, phrases, and simple clauses in *bahasa Indonesia*. The followings are the examples of one-word-utterances produced and understood by Alifia.

(1) Mother : *Alif! Ayo, ini jeruk dibawa Bunda. Alif suka?*

- 'Alif! Come here, this are oranges brought by Bunda, do you like them?'
- Alifia : *Jeuk? Ya ma.*  
'Oranges? Yes mom.'
- (2) Alifia : *Nda, jeuk manis. Dua... dua.*  
'Bunda, this orange is sweet. I want two oranges.'
- Aunt : *Ya jeruk manis. Dua boleh, tapi makan satu dulu.*  
'Yes, sweet oranges. You may have two, but eat one first.'
- Alifia : *Dua, satu, ... Dua, Nda.*  
'Two, one ... I want two oranges, Bunda.'
- Granpa : *Ya, tapi satu dulu.*  
'Yes, but you may take one first.'
- Alifia : *Aakh, dua, dua Nyiak...*  
'Ach, I want two oranges, Nyiak...'
- Aunt : *Ya, ya. Ini ambil dua...*  
'Ok, right, you may take two oranges.'
- (3) Mother : *Lif, mandi lagi... nanti dingin...*  
'Lif, let's take a bath... it is cold later.'
- Alifia : *Ndak... antik...*  
'No, later..'
- Mother : *Nanti mama pukul... mau lidi?...*  
'Then, I'll hit you ... will you?'
- Alifia : *aaaa... antik... ma...*  
'aaaa... later ... mom...'
- Father : *Alif! Mandi sama mama... nanti airnya dingin.*  
'Alif! Let's take a bath with mom, ... the water will soon get cold.'
- Alifia : *aaa ... mama... mandi, Alif citu aa...*  
'aaa... mama ... take a bath, Alif is going there...'
- (4) Alifia : *Ayah... mamam Yah. Inyiak mamam. Mak In, mam...*  
'Ayah... let's have breakfast. Inyiak and Mak In also.'
- Uncle : *Iyo Lif, aa mamam Lif?*  
'Ok, Lif, what is the meal?'
- Alifia : *Mamam cup, ayam... Ma, minum...*  
'We're having soup, chicken soup... Mom, drink...'
- Mother : *Ya, bagi piring dulu... untuk Ayah, Inyiak, Mak In...*  
'Yes, serve the plates first... for Ayah, Inyiak, Mak In...'
- Alifia : *Bunda, mamam... dua, dua.. mamam...*  
'Bunda, breakfast... two, two (big spoonful)... have breakfast...'
- Aunt : *Iya nak, boleh, mamam banyak-banyak, pakai cup.*

'Alright, my dear, let's have a lot, with soup.'

Alifia : *Pakai cendok, dua... abe...*

'Give me spoon, two ... chili...'

Mother : *Cabe? Nanti pedas, pedas... mamam cup aja.*

'Chili? It is hot, hot... let's have soup only.'

Alifia : *Aaa... abe... Inyik juga.*

'Aaa... chili... Inyik also has it.'

The data above show that Alifia gave responses well to the utterances addressed to her. The language inputs were in *bahasa Indonesia* and she gave responses in *bahasa Indonesia* too. These are the utterances produced and comprehended by Alifia when she was 2 to 2:6 years old. Based on the observation and data recorded, it can be seen that she gave responses addressed to her in *bahasa Indonesia* (see (1), and (3)) and initiated the utterances in *bahasa Indonesia* as well (see (2) and (4)). Alifia still gave response and produced utterances in *bahasa Indonesia*, although someone else (uncle) spoke to her in Minangkabau language (see (4)).

The participant observation and data recorded as presented above tell that the language inputs given by the core-family members (mother, father, grandfather, uncle, and aunt) as occurred to Alifia mostly determined the language firstly acquired by children. If the language inputs are in *bahasa Indonesia*, the first language of the children is *bahasa Indonesia*. The language inputs naturally obtained and psychologically processed by Alifia, such as in this study, were mostly given by the members of the core-family. She was still in a small socio-cultural scope in her core-family. She did not have intensive interaction with people in a larger socio-cultural environment yet. Almost all the language inputs belong to the micro language inputs. Consequently, the micro language inputs, in *bahasa Indonesia*, naturally and mentally influenced Alifia's first language acquisition.

The data collected in this study show that the micro language inputs contributed optimally to Alifia's first language acquisition. The micro language inputs, the language inputs in *bahasa Indonesia* given by core-family members, subconsciously made *bahasa Indonesia* as the first language possessed by Alifia until she was 2:6 years old. The case of Alifia's first language acquisition supports the theories of language acquisition stating that the language inputs given by the core-family members will be subconsciously acquired by children optimally during the first periods/stages of children's age. In this study, it is proved that this language condition was found in the age of 2 – 3 years old.

Further analysis on the socio-cultural factors tells that this condition was caused by the facts that Alifia still mostly interact and live in a small scope of

socio-cultural environment; the communicative interaction dominantly took place at home and with the members of core-family. The language inputs given by other people in larger socio-cultural environment did not affect Alifia's first language acquisition because she did not have optimal verbal interactions with people in surrounding environment. It seems that a few language inputs in Minangkabauese given by other people did not meaningfully affect Alifia's language acquisition. It can be argued here that the macro language inputs, the language inputs from people in larger socio-cultural environment, did not mentally and naturally contributed to children's first language acquisition if there is no optimal communicative interaction with people in larger society yet. At least, it occurs until around 3 years old, as supported by data in this study.

### **The Contribution of Macro and Micro Language Inputs during 3 – 3:6 Years Old**

By the age of 3 years, children mostly interact in verbal communication with core-family members in their own family. They have no optimal communicative interaction with people in a larger society. As the result, micro language inputs contribute meaningfully to the children's first language acquisition. The macro language inputs have not naturally contributed to the children's first language acquisition yet. When a child has been 3 years or more, they begin to have optimal communicative interactions with other people. They try to be involved in their larger society in many ways and aspects. Consequently, the macro language inputs given by people from larger environment and society affect the next period of first language acquisition (see Ingram, 1989; Bonvillain, 1993; Harley, 1995; and Hoff, 2005).

The psycholinguistic study on Alifia's first language acquisition conducted when she was 3 – 3:6 years shows that the argumentations above are reasonably acceptable. The followings are the utterances produced and comprehended by Alifia during the age of 3 – 3:6 years.

(5) Mother : *Lif, cepat makannya. Nanti mama pergi. Ikut ndak?*

'Lif, eat quickly! Mama will go. Will you go too?'

Alifia : *Ya, ma. Kudu Alif ikut... ke pasar jauh...*

'Yes, mom. Alif goes later... to the far market...'

Mother : *Ke pasar jauh dengan Uncu nanti. Suap nasi cepat!*

'To the far market with Uncu. Eat rice soon!'

Alifia : *Aaa... nanti Alif ikut juga. Naik kuda... samo Bang Jaki.*

'aaa... Alif will go. Riding horse... together with Bang Jaki.'

Aunt : *Cepat Lif, suap nasinya...*

'Be quick Lif, eat the rice!'

- Alifia : *Mama padusi, Uncu padusi, Inyia laki-laki. Padusi duo...*  
'Mom is female, Uncu is female, Inyia is male. Two females.'
- Father : *Bagus, Alif juga padusi.*  
'Good, Alif is also female.'
- (6) Alifia : *Ayah! Ado kue? Tadi Abang Jaki bawa kue, banyaaak...*  
'Ayah!, Any cookies? Abang Jaky brought many cookies.'
- Uncle : *Ondeeh, lupu bao kue. Beko wak bali yo.*  
'Oh, I forgot to bring cookies. We'll buy them later.'
- Alifia : *Lupa terus, nanti ke pasar?*  
'You always forgot, Will you later go to the market?'
- Aunt : *Nggak, nanti kita beli di kedai.*  
'No, we buy them later in a café.'
- Alifia : *Beli kue banyak, duo bali kudu.*  
'Buy many cookies, buy two cookies later.'
- (7) Uncle : *Aa makan Alif? Lamak?*  
'What are you eating Alif? Is it tasty?'
- Alifia : *Makan ayam. Pakai lado.*  
'Eating chicken. With chili.'
- Uncle : *Ndak padeh? Santiang Alifia yo.*  
'Isn't it hot? Alifia is good!'
- Alifia : *Papa juga makan lado, ndak padeh doh.*  
'Papa is also eating chili, it is not hot.'
- Aunt : *Bagus anak bunda. Makan banyak-banyak, cepat besar.*  
'My niece is good. Eat much, get bigger soon.'
- Alifia : *Bunda makan banyak juga?.*  
'Do you also eat much Bunda?'
- Aunt : *Yaa. Mmmh, Bunda makan sayur... makan ikan...*  
'Yes. Mmmh, Bunda is eating vegetable, fish...'
- Alifia : *Alif makan pakai sendok, mintak aia ma?*  
'Alif is eating with spoon, give me some water, mom?'
- (8) Alifia : *Hallo, Bunda di mana? Di Mekah?*  
'Hello, where are you Bunda? In Mecca?'
- Aunt : *Ya, Nak. Bunda dan Ayah di Mekah. Alif sehat?*  
'Yes, Girl. Bunda and Ayah are in Mecca. Are you all right?'
- Alifia : *Ada duren di sana, Bunda?*  
'Are there any durians there, Bunda?'
- Aunt : *Ondeh anak Bunda. Di sini tidak ada duren...*  
'O, sorry dear. No durians are here.'
- Alifia : *Di pasar? Ada di pasar, Bunda?*

'In the market? Are there durians in the market, Bunda?'

Aunt : *Bunda jauh Nak. Nanti kita beli ya...*

'Bunda is far away, Dear. Later we'll buy them.'

Alifia : *Kudu Bunda beli duo-duo; sama Uncu jo Mak In...*

'Later, buy two durians, Bunda; together with Uncu and Mak In.'

When Alifia was more than 3 years old, she began to have intensive communicative interactions with other people in larger society. Macro language inputs came to her mind and she mentally processed the inputs. Based on the data above, the utterances produced and comprehended by Alifia were not solely in *bahasa Indonesia* anymore, although the core-family members were still using *bahasa Indonesia*. She used *bahasa Indonesia* as her first language, but some Minangkabaunese words were inside. She gave responses in a mixing code; the utterances produced and comprehended by Alifia were in *bahasa Indonesia* and in Minangkabaunese. (See the data above; the underlined words are Minangkabaunese).

The recorded utterances above ((5) – (8)) illustrate that the mixing codes (the mixing utterances) produced and comprehended by young children after 3 years old (as Alifia's case in this study) appeared to be the consequences of more socio-cultural interactions outside their core-family. The language inputs coming to their mind, as the features of life experience, are progressively influenced by people in a larger society. They begin involving in the society in addition to the core-family environment. As the result, more macro language inputs affect their first language acquisition. The socio-cultural language inputs so called macro language inputs in this article influence the forms and features of children's first language inputs (see Ingram, 1989; Bonvillain, 1993). This linguistic condition was found in Alifia's first language acquisition as shown by the data above.

The participant observation to the language situation and social interaction of Alifia leads us to state that her communicative interactions were not with the members of the core-family anymore. Her friends and other people spoke to her mostly in Minangkabaunese. It seems that she failed to maintain the micro language inputs in *bahasa Indonesia* that had built her first language. She did not want to be socially and linguistically different from others in a larger society. In this case, Alifia began to orally imitate and naturally processed the utterances she heard from larger environment. It can be psycholinguistically argued here that macro language inputs gave significant contribution to Alifia's first language once she had active and intensive interaction with macro environment; when she felt as a part of her society. This language situation was more obviously seen when she was around 3:6 years old.

This study comes to the psycholinguistic findings that micro language inputs significantly contributed to Alifia's first language acquisition. The micro language inputs became the basis of her first language. It particularly occurred by the age of 3 years old. It was obviously caused by the fact that she dominantly lived inside the core-family; she mostly interacted with her parents, aunts, uncle, and grandfather. When she was more than 3 years, macro language inputs began to influence Alifia's first language. Macro language inputs gave significant contribution to her first language development. It is reasonably supposed that in the next periods of Alifia's first language acquisition, the contribution of macro language inputs become bigger and bigger, then. This argument surely needs further studies on the first language development of children.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This study is still in a limited-longitudinal research on children's first language acquisition by having a young child, Alifia, as the subject of the study. Actually, the longitudinal research on children's language acquisition needs more time and specific technique of data collection and data analysis. Related to this, this study and its finding need further and critical analysis in order to have scientific conclusions. However, this study has come to a reasonable conclusion that micro language inputs, the language inputs given by people in the core-family has a significant contribution to children's first language acquisition. This condition naturally and mentally occurred by the age of 3 years old; the micro linguistic inputs are dominant in building children's first language. It is caused by the facts that the children are mostly in the core-family environment. Then, when young children have been more than 3 years, macro language inputs progressively contribute to children' first language acquisition. It is caused by the fact that the children begin to live and to have intensive communicative interactions with people in a larger socio-cultural environment. Children face the language situation that they have to be a part of their society. They need to communicate in the same ways as their friends do, unless they will be outside of the environment.

The findings and conclusion claimed in this article may be criticized scientifically in order to have better ones. The longer time in the longitudinal research is obviously needed in addition to well preparations and clear research instruments. Therefore, those who are interested in the studies of children's language acquisition may continue further researches and analyses. It is also suggested that other topics of study on human's language acquisition can be conducted.



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