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Brown's Morphological Skills in Typically Developing Bilingual (Malayalam-English) Speaking Children

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Abstract

Language is the core of an effective communicative process. The appearance and mastery of the 14 grammatical morphemes in relation to the stages of development was found in the Brown's research. Morphemes generally convey meanings that could only be implied through the simple word orders and they were mastered at various stages as the child's language

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developed. The present study was determined to account which morphological structures were achieved by 5-6 years Malayalam – English speaking children. A total of 30 typically developing children participated in the present study. The speech sample was obtained from conversation and picture description tasks. Results indicate that in picture description task out of 14 grammatical morphemes only six morphemes were present and for general conversation eight morphemes were present in 5-7 Years typically developing Malayalam-English bilingual children. Out of two tasks the children performed well in general conversation. The obtained data is useful for Speech- Language pathologists to understand typical English second language acquisition and how it differs from monolingual English in order to accurately assess and effectively identify potential language disorders as early as possible. Also the results can be used to compare with language disordered group.

Key words: Morphological skills, Malayalam Language

Introduction

Language is the main vehicle for communication. Language is the core of an effective communicative process. Children in the process of language development go through the variety of universally sequential stages of development with amazing ease unless an interference due to any motor or sensory deficits occurs.

Language is a complex and dynamic system of conventional symbols that is used in various modes for thought and communication. Contemporary views of human language holds that, language evolves within specific historical, social and cultural context; language is a rule governed behavior, described by at least five parameters phonologic, morphologic, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic language learning and use are determined by interaction of biological, cognitive, psychological and environmental factors(American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA,1982).

An individual is exposed to more than one language, with increasing mobility or globalization. Hence an individual must or should know more than one language i.e. be bilingual

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or multilingual to be an efficient communicator. Bilingualism means a person who knows more than one language (Mackey, 1962).

Tucker (1998) reported that majority of children across the globe grow up speaking more than one language. The pattern of language development in these children has attracted various researchers. Generally it is accepted that there are two different pattern of bilingual language development i.e. Simultaneous and sequential.

Simultaneous bilingual children are those whose dual language learning experiences began at birth or at least before the age of three (Howard 1995). Sequential bilinguals are distinct from simultaneous bilinguals in that one language introduced after the other language has become somewhat established (Castilla, Restrepo & Leroux, 2009). Hence one needs to study each aspects of bilingual language to comment on the development of bilinguals. Relatively little research has been conducted on children's English grammatical development in bilinguals.

Bland-Stewart and Fitzgerald (2001) studied Standard American English (SAE) morphological development in bilingual Hispanic preschoolers. Analysis of the data revealed emergent use of Brown's 14 grammatical morphemes, although mastery generally was not seen at the same ages as those expected for SAE speakers. They found that the English morphological structures produced by bilingual children followed a different developmental pattern when compared to the order of acquisition of typically developing monolingual English children as outlined by Brown (1973).

Khan and James (2008) the order and rate of acquisition of Brown's(1973) 14 grammatical morphemes were investigated in three children with language disorders periodic spontaneous language samples were analyzed for correct and incorrect use of the morphemes in obligatory contexts. Results indicated that the group's order of acquisition was similar to that reported by Brown (1973) and De Villiers (1973) for normal children but that there were individual variations in the children's acquisition orders. Also, the language disordered children

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demonstrated a much slower rate of acquisition than that reported for normally developing children.

Steckol and Leonard (1979) studied the grammatical morpheme usage of normal children and language-impaired children matched at two different levels of mean utterance length. The language-impaired children displayed less grammatical morpheme usage than the normal children with equivalent mean utterance length.

Viji and Kumaraswamy (2013) studied Brown's Morphological skills in Kannada – English Bilingual children and results show that out of 14 grammatical morphemes only 6 morphemes namely present progressive 'ing', articles, plurals, prepositions like 'on', 'in' and contractible auxiliary were present in 5-7 years in Kannada-English speaking bilingual children.

Need of the Study

India with its history of exposure to English language and current demand for English medium Education joins global trend of multilingualism. English is generally learnt as second language in school system from the age of 3 or 4 years. English language development hence forms an important Educational issue in India. Since, English is spoken in India (Indian English) and currently treated as one of the official languages in India. Speech Language Pathologist need to understand typical English language acquisition and how it differs from monolingual English in order to accurately assess and effectively identify potential language disorders as early as possible. Hence, in the current study we take a small step towards studying English morphological development in Malayalam-English bilinguals.

Aim

The aim of the study was to determine the order of acquisition of English morphological structures produced by Malayalam-English bilingual children and which morphological structures mastered by 5-7 years.

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Methodology

A total of thirty school going Malayalam speaking children in the age range of 5-7 years attending English medium school, speaking Malayalam as native language and English as their second language with no history of speech and hearing problems, Neurological problems and other medical illness participated in the present study.

A conversation sample between clinician-child and picture card description (school, home, and playground) was digitally recorded using PRAAT software 5.1 version (Boersma & Weenink, 2009). Stimulus preparation was done based on the 5 experienced Speech Language Pathologists view, four color picture cards depicting the activities of school, home and playground were chosen for picture description task.

The most noise free room of the school was chosen for the recording of data. At a time one child was taken for the recording. Child was asked to sit in a chair, conversation sample was recorded and four picture cards were given to him, one after the other which he had to describe the activities happened in the picture card. The instruction by the clinician was given in English for conversation sample and for picture description task. For the above two task the client has to describe in full and meaningful sentence. If the participants were not able to say in complete sentence, semantic cues were given only once.

A score of one for presence of morphemes and zero for absence was obtained. The audio recorded samples were transcribed using International Phonetic Alphabet -5 and analyzed for morphological structures. This data is statistically analyzed using Kruskal Walli's test to find the presence or absence of the various morphemes as well as the pattern of the morphemic development to have a general idea about the bilingual Malayalam-English speakers speaker's English morphemic development. The identified morphemes were compared with Brown's 14 stages and checked for order of acquisition and its relevance in Malayalam-English bilinguals.

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Result and Discussion

The aim of the present study is to determine which English morphemes were produced by 5-7 years typically developing bilingual (Malayalam- English) children. Each subject's utterances were analyzed separately for the acquisition of 14 Brown's morphological skills.

Age group: Total

Task	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Median	Mannwhitney test Z value	p value	
Present Progression "ing"	General conversation	30	1	2	42	1.40	.498	1.00	3.02	.003
	Picture description	30	0	2	28	.93	.583	1.00		HS
Preposition-in	General conversation	30	0	1	21	.70	.466	1.00	2.32	.021
	Picture description	30	0	1	12	.40	.498	.00		sig
Preposition on	General conversation	30	0	1	16	.53	.507	1.00	2.09	.037
	Picture description	30	0	1	8	.27	.450	.00		sig
Plural	General conversation	30	0	1	15	.50	.509	.50	1.30	.194
	Picture description	30	0	1	10	.33	.479	.00		
Past Irregular	General conversation	30	0	1	5	.17	.379	.00	2.32	.021
	Picture description	30	0	0	0	.00	.000	.00		sig
Possessive Inflection	General conversation	30	0	0	0	.00	.000	.00	.00	1.000
	Picture description	30	0	0	0	.00	.000	.00		
Uncontractible Copula	General conversation	30	0	0	0	.00	.000	.00	.00	1.000
	Picture description	30	0	0	0	.00	.000	.00		
Articles	General conversation	30	0	1	20	.67	.479	1.00	1.55	.121
	Picture description	30	0	1	14	.47	.507	.00		
Regular Past Tense	General conversation	30	0	1	4	.13	.346	.00	2.05	.040
	Picture description	30	0	0	0	.00	.000	.00		sig
Regular Third Person Singular	General conversation	30	0	0	0	.00	.000	.00	.00	1.000
	Picture description	30	0	0	0	.00	.000	.00		
Irregular Third Person Singular	General conversation	30	0	0	0	.00	.000	.00	.00	1.000
	Picture description	30	0	0	0	.00	.000	.00		
Uncontractible Auxillary	General conversation	30	0	0	0	.00	.000	.00	.00	1.000
	Picture description	30	0	0	0	.00	.000	.00		
Contractible Copula	General conversation	30	0	0	0	.00	.000	.00	.00	1.000
	Picture description	30	0	0	0	.00	.000	.00		
Contractible Auxillary	General conversation	30	0	1	10	.33	.479	.00	.85	.394
	Picture description	30	0	1	7	.23	.430	.00		
Total	General conversation	30	2	7	133	4.43	1.331	5.00	4.42	.000
	Picture description	30	0	5	79	2.63	1.273	3.00		HS

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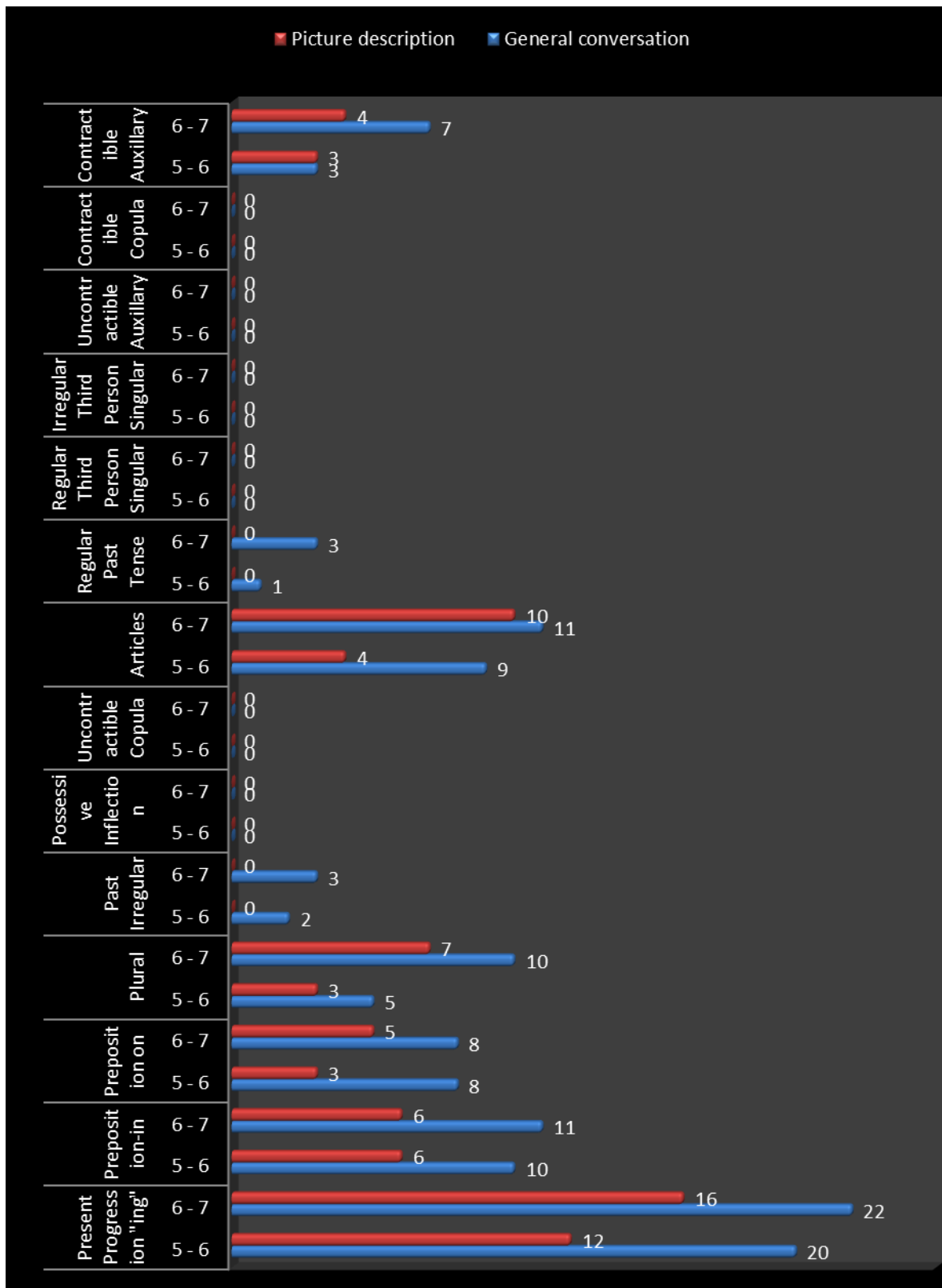
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Table 1: showing the mean, standard deviation of evaluated Brown 14 morphemes for general conversation and picture description tasks.

The above table reveals the 14 Brown's morphemes. In picture description task out of 14 grammatical morphemes only six morphemes were present in 5-7 Years typically developing Malayalam-English bilingual children namely present progressive 'ing'(0.93), articles(0.47), prepositions like 'in'(0.40), 'on' (0.27) plurals(0.33), and contractible auxiliary(0.23) from most commonly used morpheme to least used morphemes respectively.

In general conversation out of 14 grammatical morphemes eight morphemes were present in 5-7 years typically developing Malayalam-English bilingual children namely present progressive 'ing'(1.40), prepositions like 'in' (0.70), 'on' (0.53), plurals(0.50), contractible auxiliary(0.33), articles(0.67) past irregular(0.17), and regular past tense(0.13) from most commonly used morpheme to least used morphemes respectively. Out of two tasks the children performed well in general conversation.



Figure

re 1: showing the mean of evaluated Brown 14 morphemes for general conversation and picture description tasks.

Discussion

The present study investigated which morphological structures achieved by 5-7 years bilingual (Malayalam – English) speaking children. More specifically, accuracy in the production of Brown's (1973) 14 grammatical morphemes were compared between Malayalam-English speaking children, who were not expected to communicate in English until they began kindergarten and they had been expected only to communicate in Malayalam at home before entering kindergarten. The present study reveals that out of 14 morphemes only 6 and 8 morphemes were present in picture task and general conversation.

Summary and Conclusion

Language is the systematic and conventional use of sounds for the purpose of communication or self-expression (Crystal, 1995). In the recent year's language behavior of children has become an important area. The description of language acquisition in children is basic to providing data on normal language acquisition and all language groups need to be studied.

An individual is exposed to more than one language, with increasing mobility or globalization. Hence an individual must or should know more than one language i.e. be bilingual or multilingual to be an efficient communicator. Bilingualism means a person who knows more than one language (Mackey, 1962). However, differences in morphologic language development may be observed when considering children learning two languages. Under the assumptions of a usage-based theory of language acquisition (Tomasello, 2003) language input and age have important role for children's morphologic language development. Relatively little research has been conducted on children's English grammatical development in bilinguals. The present study investigated which morphological structures achieved by 5-7 years Malayalam – English bilingual children. A conversation sample between clinician- child and picture card description was recorded on thirty school going (Malayalam-English) bilingual speakers. More specifically,
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accuracy in production of Brown's (1973) 14 grammatical morphemes were compared between Malayalam-English speaking children, who were not expected to communicate in English until they began kindergarten and they had been expected only to communicate in Malayalam at home before entering kindergarten. The present study reveals that out of 14 morphemes only 6 and 8 morphemes were present in picture task and general conversation respectively which are in accordance with Bland-Stewart and Fitzgerald (2001). He hypothesized that English morphological structures produced by bilingual (Hispanic – English) children followed a different developmental pattern when compared to the order of acquisition of typically developing monolingual English children. Malayalam-English bilingual children followed a different morphological developmental pattern when compared to the typically developing monolingual English children.

Clinical Implications

Speech language pathologists may benefit by using the above profile for better assessment and rehabilitation of language in Malayalam speaking individual. So for further research this study can be carried across various Indian languages and other language impaired population.

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