

Tense Markers in Kannada Speaking Intellectual Disabled Children

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Abstract

In Indian setup there are a limited number of studies in language acquisition. The present study focuses on acquisition of tense form in Kannada speaking intellectual disabled children. In Indian context, the practice of speech language pathologists is dampened in the task of providing qualitative language assessment and therapy for children with delayed language development, due to the lack of data on language development in Kannada speaking intellectual disabled children. So establishing data base in this aspect will help SLPs in providing qualitative service. Detailed research on language acquisition in Kannada speaking intellectual disabled children will provide important information for assessment and intervention.

Keywords: language acquisition, acquisition of tense forms, intellectual disabled children, Kannada

Introduction

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 hold that:

- Language evolves within specific historical, social, and cultural contexts;
- Language, as rule-governed behavior, is described by at least five parameters—phonologic, morphologic, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic.
- Language learning and use are determined by the interaction of biological, cognitive, psychosocial, and environmental factors.

- Effective use of language for communication requires a broad understanding of human interaction including such associated factors as nonverbal cues, motivation, and sociocultural roles. (American Speech and Hearing Association, 1982)

Language, as rule-governed behavior, is described by at least five parameters-phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Phonology is the study of how sounds are organized and used in natural languages. The phonological system of a language includes an inventory of sounds and their features, and. rules which specify how sounds interact with each other.

Morphology is the identification, analysis and description of the structure of a given language's morphemes and other linguistic units, such as root words, affixes, parts of speech, intonations and stresses, or implied context.

Syntax is the set of rules, principles, and processes that govern the structure of sentences in a given language, specifically word order. The term syntax is also used to refer to the study of such principles and processes. Semantics is the study of meaning. It focuses on the relation between signifiers, like words, phrases, signs, and symbols and what they stand for; their denotation. Pragmatics is language in use and the contexts in which it is used, including such matters as deixis, the taking of turns in conversation, text organization, presupposition, and implicatures.

Morpho-syntax is the study of grammatical categories or linguistic units that have both morphological and syntactic properties. Morpho syntax includes the set of rules that govern linguistic units whose properties are definable by both morphological and syntactic criteria. In grammar, tense is a category that expresses time reference. Tenses are usually manifested by the use of specific forms of verbs, particularly in their conjunction patterns. Basic tenses found in many languages include the past, present and future. Some languages have only two distinct tenses, such as past and non-past, or future and non-future. Tenses are in various languages are Present tense, Past tense, Present perfect, Past perfect, Future, Future perfect etc. Individual tense forms can serve multiple functions.

Review of Literature

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Language is defined as a code whereby idea about the world is represented by a conservative system of signals for communication (Bloom & Lahey, 1974). Language set up with a set of symbols (codes), set of action (rules) which combine to form words phrases and sentence for the purpose of communication. The language components consist of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. Phonology belongs to the sound system of particular language mainly with production (Luck, 1991) morphology is the study of morphemes which can be described as the smallest units of speech that carries meaning (Luck, 1991) syntax refers to the order of arrangement of words .This arrangement reveals significant rapport within & between the sentences. Most syntactic research has focused on the relation expressed at the sentence level.

Tense marking is an important module of syntax. According to browns stages of language development tense development begins in stage 2 and continues well into the school age years .in fact the period of greatest acquisition is form 4 to 7 years (Brown, 1973) tense is a category that express time references basic tense found in many language includes the past, present and future tense.

Brown (1973) studied three children who were native speakers of American English. Brown's findings included the observation that the three children learned English morphemes in roughly the same order, although they did not acquire them at the same age. His investigations found striking similarities in the language learning behavior of the children. Brown felt that the similarity in the subjects' order of acquisition was particularly interesting because the pattern of development was clear despite the fact that the data were drawn from spontaneous speech. Brown when studying the emergence of a number of structures in English, found a consistent 'order of acquisition' and came up with 14 grammatical morphemes in English and the order in which the children acquired them.

Rutter and Buckley (1994) investigated the acquisition of grammar in children _ with Down syndrome, in particular to look at the production of morphological rules, and onset ages at which they are acquired in their language and suggested that once the children with Down syndrome

get going with the production of language, they in fact show a similar pattern as typically developing children in the early acquisition of grammar.

Rice and Wexler (1996) evaluated as candidate clinical markers, a set of morphemes that mark Tense. In English, this includes *-s* third person singular, *-ed* regular past, *BE*, and *DO* in children with Specific Language Impairment (SLI). The findings are discussed in terms of alternative accounts of the grammatical limitations of children with SLI and implications for clinical identification.

Paradis and Crago (2000) examined the children's use of tense morphology, temporal adverbials, agreement morphology, and distributional contingencies associated with finiteness and findings indicated that the use of Morphosyntax by children with SLI and by L2 children has significant similarities, although certain specific differences exist. Both the children with SLI and the L2 children demonstrate optional infinitive effects in their language use.

Tyler, Davies, Anokhina, Longworth and Randall (2002) studied Dissociations in Processing Past Tense Morphology: Neuropathology and Behavioral Studies and results reveals that the no fluent patients showed no priming for the regular past tense but significant priming for the irregulars (whereas controls show priming for both). In contrast, the HSE patients showed significantly impaired performance for the irregulars in an elicitation task. These patterns of behavioral data and neuropathology suggest that two separable but interdependent systems underlie processing of the regular and irregular past tense.

Ramsden, Botting and Faragher (2003) studied Psycholinguistic Markers for Specific Language Impairment (SLI) The results show that markers vary in accuracy, with sentence repetition (a previously unused marker) proving to be the most useful. This psycholinguistic marker shows high levels of sensitivity (90%), specificity (85%), and overall accuracy (88%), as well as being able to identify the majority of children whose current language status falls in the normal range despite a history of SLI.

Hadley and Short (2005) studied the onset of tense marking in children at risk for specific language impairment and found that all measures of onset were highly correlated with the traditional measures; however, children's progress toward mastery of grammatical tense marking

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was best explained by the productivity of their tense marking systems. Finally, the onset measures imposing productivity requirements best differentiated children in the LA group from those in the AR-SLI group.

Paradis, Rice, Crago and Marquis (2008) reported the use and knowledge of tense-marking morphemes in English by first language (L1), second language (L2) and specifically language-impaired (SLI) children. Results showed that the L2 children had a unique profile compared with their monolingual peers, which was better characterized by the Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis. At the same time, results reinforce the assumption underlying the (Extended) Optional Infinitive profile that internal constraints on the acquisition of tense could be a component of L1 development, with and without SLI.

Gau, Spencer and Tomblin (2013) investigated the development of tense markers (e.g., past tense –ed) in children with cochlear implants (CIs) over a 3-year span and The findings suggested that despite the perceptual and processing constraints, children who received CIs may learn tense marking albeit with a delayed pattern.

Shah and Friedman (2015) observed the production of verb tense in sentences is more severely impaired than other functional categories in persons with agrammatic aphasia. Result reveals Tensed verbs were significantly more impaired than neutral (nonfinite) verbs, but there were no consistent differences between past, present, and future tenses. Overall, tense accuracy was mediated by task, such that picture description task was the most challenging.

Sudha (1981) used syntax screening test in Tamil for normal children in the age range 2 to 5 to report development data result indicated an increase in the overall performance of all the ten grammatical categories like negation tense, plurals, wh question that were observed as a function of age, significant difference between the performance of males and females on test were observed in all groups except in 3.6 to 4 years.

Subramanaiah (cited in Kathyayani, 1984) studied the development of morphological categories in Kannada in children between 6 to 8 years of age and reported that they used genders plurals and tense correctly.

Subbaro (1995) aimed at obtaining descriptive language Data in Kannada speaking intellectually disabled children and results revealed that the overall delay in language development there are differences among the MA matched normal and ID children. These differences are most easily noticeable in syntactic aspects as compared to phonological or semantic aspects. The tense markers present and past were used by large number of subjects in both groups .future/ habitual tense was mainly used by normal subjects.

George (2000) studied semantic and syntactic skill in 20 fluent Malayalam speaking LD children ranging in age from 6 to 15 years using Linguistic Profile test. Result showed that even though LD children have fluent speech they showed a lag in both syntax and semantics scores than that of normal .but as the age progresses LD scores also improved like normal.

Khansir (2008) analyzed the syntactic Errors in English committed by 100 B.Com second year students in several colleges of University of Mysore, India. An English grammar test based on the textbooks of the studied colleges and including areas like auxiliary verbs, passive and tenses was developed and used by the researcher. The study revealed that the areas of highest to lowest percentage of errors made by the sample were Tenses (39), use of Auxiliaries (33) and Passive Voice (28); and the major source of errors was learning strategies of the learners.

Shasthry (2010) reported a study on acquisition of tense markers in 5 to 8 years old Kundapura Kannada speaking typically developing children from her study of 30 children she reported that the frequency of occurrence of present tense markers were more when compared to other tense markers. There were dialectal variations which were frequently observed in present tense forms were simplifications of CVs was significant followed by vowel shortening, syntactic deviation and semantic deviations. She concluded that the result of the study is in agreement with Subbarao (1995) who reported that the usage of present tense markers were maximum in 4 to 6 year old normally developing children.

Madappa (2015) investigated the use of past tense markers, discourse markers and pronoun use in English L2 children using narrative discourse the study proves that there exists an order of acquisition in children and this is true across languages, irrespective of what the L1 is. The fact that ‘and’ being the only prominent discourse marker being used shows that the learner is not equipped with using discourse markers. These findings thus support the fundamental assumptions made by both the paradigms under study and are consistent with prior research and adds to already existing research in the area.

Murali and Kumaraswamy (2015) studied acquisition of tense markers in typically developing Malayalam speaking children and results indicated that highly significant scores among the tense markers across the age groups. The occurrence of simple future tense was less frequent when compared to other tense markers and also found that as the age increases the ability to use correct tense forms has been improved.

Common Present Tense Marker

The common present tense marker in Kannada is /-tt-/, and it occurs between verb stem and the PNG marker.

/ho:g/ — ‘go’ + /-tt-/ ‘present’ + /ini/

‘1st p. sing’ — /ho:gti:ni/ ‘I go’.

/tago/ - ‘take (for oneself)’ + /-tt- + ini/

‘1st p. sing’ - /tagoti:ni/ ‘I take (for myself)’

The *common past* tense form is /-id/, Examples:

/ma:d/ - ‘make, do’ — /ma:did - madde/ ‘done’

/malag/ - ‘sleep’ - /malagid/ - ‘slept’

There are *exceptions* in forming past tense, some examples are,

/tinn/ - ‘eat’ - /tind/ - ‘ate’

/bi:l/ - ‘fall’ - /bidd/ - ‘fell’

/so:l/ - ‘lose’ - /so:t/ - ‘lost’

/koll/ - 'kill' - /kond/ - 'killed'

/sa:y/ - 'die' - /satt/ - 'died'

/bar/ - 'come' - /band/ - 'came'

/hor/ - 'carry' - /hott/ - 'carried'

/bid/ - 'leave' - /bitt/ - 'left'

/bari/ - 'write' - /bard/ - 'wrote'

Generally *regular future tense markers* are not found. The verb /-iru/ is used as future/habitual tense marker. The future/habitual may mean 'will be' or 'be (always)'. Example:

/na:nu iddini - irtini/

1st sg pr present future/habitual

Sometimes contingent form is used to indicate 'might (do something)',

Example:

/na:nu bande:nu/ 'I might come'

/avanu banda:nu/ 'he might come'

Need for the Study

In Indian context, the practice of speech language pathologists are dampened in the task of providing qualitative language assessment and therapy for children with delayed language development. Due to the lack of data on language development in Kannada speaking intellectual disabled children, so establishing data base in this aspect will help SLPs in providing a quality service. Keen and depth of research on language acquisition in Kannada speaking intellectual disabled children will provide important information for assessment and intervention.

Aim of the Study

The present study aimed to report the tense markers in Kannada speaking intellectual disabled children with the mental age of 4-6 yrs compared with typically developing children.

Methodology

Subject Selection

The present study included 30 children chronological age 11-18 years and mental age of 4-6 years as per the school records, diagnosed with intellectual disability according to DSM-IV and ICD-10 as participants of the study. Participants belonged to different age ranges with mental age between 4-6 years and 30 typical school-going children as participants of the study.

All the participants had a verbal repertoire of two-word phrases and were monolingual speakers of Kannada. The clinical group children were receiving speech, language and psychological intervention at the time of testing.

Inclusion Criteria

- Mental Age range 4-6 years as per school records
- Children with Intellectual disability
- Kannada as first language

Exclusion Criteria

- No significant hearing impairment.

Procedure

Conversational samples were video recorded in informal and naturally occurring play situations and subjected to analysis. Data collection was done in quiet situation with one to one interaction between subject and listener. The recording environment was a quiet room in the school building.

Results & Discussion

The aim of the present was to report the tense markers through language sample obtained on conversational of Kannada speaking children with intellectual disability and compare type

and presence of tense markers age group, the obtained data was analyzed and results are discussed below.

S.NO	PARAMETERS	Typically developing Children N=30 (4-6 yrs)		Subjects with intellectual Disability N=30 (MA= 4-6yrs)	
			%		%
1	Present	30	100	30	83
2	Past	30	90	30	57
3	Future	30	100	30	57
4	Contingent forms	30	0	30	0

TABLE 1: Showing percentage value of Tenses in typically developing Children and subjects with Intellectual Disability.

Typically Developing Children

As seen from the above table it can be seen that the present tense /-tt-/ and future habitual /-iru/ was used by 100% of subject whereas past tense /-id-/ was used by 90% of subjects showing an increased number of subjects using this structure and contingent form was not by any of the subjects.

Subjects with Intellectual Disability

The above table reveals that present tense /-tt-/ was used by 83% subjects showing increased number of subjects using this structure, whereas past tense /-id-/ 57% and future habitual /-iru-/ 57% was used by less number of subjects as well as contingent form was not used by any of these subjects.

When we compare subjects with intellectual Disability and typically developing Children, Typically developing Children used present tense to full extent (100%). Whereas subjects with intellectual disability only 83% subjects used this structure. Past tense was used 90% of subject in typically developing Children and only 57% subjects with intellectual disability. Future habitual was used by 100% in reference group and 57% subjects used this structure. The contingent form was not used by any subjects in both groups.

Discussion

As you can see from the above result it is clear that the usage of tense markers increase with age. This is in accordance to Roopa (1980) as she says that developmentally 5 years old children were found to use more sentence structure than 4 years old children also the basic sentence structure used by children are similar to that used by adult also Wexler (1999) stated that tense grows like a boy grows undergoing a biologically regulated sequence of change just like difference are expected in rate of tense.

Summary and Conclusion

The need for providing quality language therapy to children with delayed language development is increasing in the Indian context. The practicing speech language pathologists are hampered in this task by the lack of data on language development in Indian languages in typically developing children. Such a data allows us in setting up of long term and short term language therapy goals suitable to the age/mental age. Further, the data of language development and performance in subjects with disorders is also lacking. This situation is observed across all Indian languages. A minor exception to this general rule is in Kannada language. Karanth (1990), Subbarao (1995), Chengappa (1998) and others have reported elaborate data of language delays and difference in subjects with intellectual disability, cerebral palsy and hearing disability.

The present study aimed to report the tenses markers in Kannada speaking children with intellectual disability in the mental age of 4-6 yrs compared with typically developing Children. Conversation samples were video recorded in informal and naturally occurring play situations and subjected to analysis. Data collection was done in quiet situation with one to one interaction between subject and listener. The recording environment was a quiet room in the school building.

Result indicated the usage of tense markers increase with age. This is in accordance to Roopa (1980) as she says that developmentally 5 years old children were found to use more sentence structure than 4 years old children also the basic sentence structure used by children are similar to that used by adult also Wexler (1999) stated that tense grows like a boy grows

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