

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Study

Language is so basic to our existence that life without words is difficult to envision. It stands at the center of human affairs, from the most prosaic to the most profound. Language is very complex. It has sound systems that allow the production of words and sentences. There are about hundred thousands of terms and constructions for relating the words, numerous distinct words, vocabularies of some 50.000 to 100.000 terms for adults. A language has not only a structure what linguists try to capture with their rules but also a function to which that structure is put. Language is fundamentally an instrument of communication. People talk as a way of conveying ideas to others – of getting them to grasp new facts, answer questions, register promises, and so forth. It is the medium through which the manners, morals, and mythology of a society are passed on to the next generation. Indeed, it is a basic ingredient in virtually every social situation. The thread that runs through all these activities is communication, where people trying to put their ideas over to others. As the main vehicle of human communication, language is indispensable.

One reason why human beings are superior to other creatures in the world is their ability to communicate. They communicate by using language to express their feelings and opinions. Therefore, language is a determining factor for survival. Without language, there is no life in the world. How one can speak is really amazing if it is searched thoroughly. Chomsky (in Papalia and Old,

1990:75) defines children in a normal life from two until six years will acquire language with structure and vocabulary. This is possible because since their birth, they have been equipped with such a device called Language Acquisition Device (LAD). A theory says that human has language devices in their mind seems acceptable up to the present. It is the means by which the child learns input from parents and babysitters. The LAD lets the children analyze the language they hear and extract the rules of grammar that allow them to create new words to help them to verbalize their intentions. Even since an infant, a baby starts to use a language. Through his crying, the baby is trying to communicate his unhappiness, hunger and so on.

In an increasingly diversified and multilingual world, more and more young children find more than one language is used. Many children grow up with more than one language. This kind of condition may be acquired early by children in regions where most people speak two languages. In infancy most people learn at least one of the country's many local languages and later learn Indonesian at school or in the streets of cities or from television and radio. Indonesian tends to be most used in the modern environment of major urban areas. The local languages tend to dominate in rural areas and small towns, and are most used in homes.

Indonesia is the fourth most populous nation in the world and Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia) is the official language of Indonesia which is used most extensively as a first language in urban areas and usually as a second or third language in more rural parts of Indonesia. It is the language of education across

the country from the primary school to the university. Most formal education, as well as nearly all national media and other forms of communication, are conducted in Indonesian. Indonesian is the language used in radio, television and magazine. It is the language of government and business administration, media, literature, and of everyday life in the big cities. There exist a huge number of Indonesian words that can be classified into two types of words. They are content words and structural words. Content words are words that convey meanings and can be understood. The meaning of a sentence will change if the content words are omitted. Kinds of content words are nouns (like: kertas and uang), verbs (like: lari and makan), adverbs (like: selalu and sekarang) and adjectives (like: kecil and tinggi). Another type of words is structural words which mean words that exist to create grammatical or structural relationship among words. They are simple and small words. They give the sentence its correct form or structure and make the sentence grammatically correct. The meaning of a sentence will not change if the structural words are omitted. Kinds of structural words are prepositions (like: ke, di), pronouns (like: aku, kamu), conjunctions (like: dan, sementara).

Indonesia as one of the big countries in the world consists of islands which are separated by oceans and islands have many tribes as well as their languages. One of the tribes is Batak. Batak is a collective ethnic term embracing five seemingly different speech communities like Batak Toba, Batak Mandailing, Batak Karo, Batak Dairi and Batak Simalungun which all of them live around the Lake of Toba in North Sumatra. The Batak Toba language is one of regional languages in Indonesia. It is spoken by about one million people living on Samosir Island and to the east, south, and south-west of Lake Toba and henceforth in North Sumatra.

There are many Indonesian children who lives in rural parts of Indonesia still know a little about Indonesian. They speak their regional language in their daily communication either with their family or friends. This condition can be seen in some parts in Indonesia especially in Samosir. In Samosir, people speak Batak Toba language as their first language and this Batak Toba language is used in their daily communication. Even though Indonesia is the nation language, many of Batak Toba children speak Batak language more often than Indonesian for they master Batak language well than Indonesian. Imagine when a Batak child moves to urban area, let say to Medan where Indonesian language is mostly spoken as the first language. All community speak Indonesian and he cannot speak up his language there. Especially when he comes to school, sadly speaking, no one speak Batak language there. These kinds of situation lead him to learn the new language, Indonesian language.

Viewing this phenomenon, the writer will conduct a research on four-year-old Batak speaking children on some aspects of Indonesian words because it can give a great deal of knowledge about the psychological and intellectual functioning of the children as they mature and the use of language is considered to have a tremendous effect on the children's relationship and their environment. There have been some previous researches related to the acquisition of words by four-year-old children. The first is done by Bachtiar entitled "The Acquisition of Indonesian Affixations by A Four-Year-Old Child" by. It was found out that the four-year-old child was able to produce prefixes, confixes, suffixes and infixes. And the second is done by Chaerul Sjah entitled "An Analysis of English Words Acquired by Children of Four Years Old". It was found out that only a small

number of English words acquired by the children of four years old in English institution.

1.2 The Problems of the Study

In relation to the background that has been elaborated previously, the problems of this study are formulated as follows:

1. What are the content words of Indonesian acquired by Batak Toba children at the age of four?
2. What are the structural words of Indonesian acquired by Batak Toba children at the age of four?
3. How do Batak Toba children at the age of four acquire the Indonesian content and structural words the way they are?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

Based on the problems of the study, so the objectives of the study are:

1. To discover the content words of Indonesian acquired by Batak Toba children at the age of four.
2. To discover the structural words of Indonesian acquired by Batak Toba children at the age of four.
3. To elaborate how Batak Toba children at the age of four acquire the Indonesian content and structural words the way they are.

1.4 The Scope of the Study

The process of children's language acquisition is a broad area to be studied because there are so many aspects to be discovered. In this study, the writer deals only with the acquisition of Indonesian words. And the children who will be observed are four-year-old Batak Toba children. They will be observed for three months.

1.5 The Significance of the Study

A study which is conducted for academic purpose has a great importance for the development of knowledge. The findings of this research certainly will provide valuable inputs that can enrich the study on the development of language acquisition. It is hoped that the findings would have valuable contributions to the theoretical and practical aspects.

- a. Theoretically, these findings can be made as guidelines for adults especially parents who are interested in the process of introducing new words to young children. It will be also very useful for references in assisting of facilitating the children in the process of acquiring new words.

And for other language researchers who are interested in conducting a more in-depth study on language acquisition, by comparing the result of this research they can enrich the knowledge on language acquisition and know how much knowledge of Indonesian language can be acquired by Batak Toba children at the age of four. This also can provide a basis for further research on the different stages of the children's words acquisition.

- b. Practically, these findings make the parents to be more active and creative in introducing new language to their children. And for the babysitters, they will be more aware of introducing a new language so that the children can produce sentences naturally whatever they want to speak and it is better for adult to make a conversation to children.