

Functional Categories in an Indonesian Child's Determiner Phrases

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In recent years, several studies have been devoted to account for how functional categories involved in a sentence or a determiner phrase (DP) have been acquired by children. In the sentence level, functional categories are grammatical categories which include tense phrase (TP), agreement phrase (AgrP), and complementizer phrase (CP), among others. But with respect to the acquisition of functional categories in determiner phrases (DP), they include elements such as agreement in the use of articles, specificity, and possessiveness, among others. In the framework of generative grammar, several researchers have approached the acquisition of functional categories as a challenging topic of discussion in language acquisition research. Some theories try to explain the emergence of syntax with respect to whether or not functional categories exist in child's grammar, whereas others take a standpoint that some functional categories are present from the initial state.

The debate of the presence functional categories in early child's grammar in the framework of generative linguistics has been roughly grouped as the supporters of Full Competence or Strong Continuity Hypothesis (Hyams 1986; 1992a, Wexler 1993), Maturation Hypothesis (Radford 1990 a, 1990 b), and Clahsen 1990 and 1991, Vainika 1993, 1994, who prefer to take the intermediate position by arguing that once children acquire specific functional morpheme, it will trigger functional projection in a phrase. As an example, Radford (1990a) proposed that early child's grammar is purely lexical, consisting NPs and VPs, and lacks functional categories. However, his proposal that is regarded as 'no functional categories' group has been challenged by some researchers such as Bohnacker (1997), O'Grady (1993), Yamashita (1998), among many others.

This paper will try to elaborate Radford's maturity hypothesis with respect to the development of an Indonesian child's DP, Arsyad Kadaryanto, aged 2; 3, my own son. In his case, functional categories seem also present in early Indonesian DP system after observing him directly in that he uttered some words projecting functional categories in Indonesian DPs. Furthermore, this paper also offers some naturalistic data of the development of demonstratives and other determiner-like elements in Indonesian, and they suggest that functional categories appear in an early acquisition of the determiner system in Indonesian.

Keywords: Functional categories, acquisition, determiner phrases.