

Linguistic Features in Child Language Acquisition: A Case Study of a Child Acquiring Sinhala as The First Language

V. Weerawardhana^{1*}

First Language Acquisition is an innate process which reveals the connection between language and the mind. Cognitivists believe that human begins acquire the first language with the help of the Language Acquisition Device (LAD), an ability unique to them. According to the Critical Period Hypothesis, children from the age of six months to three years, children internalise their mother tongue from the language environment they are exposed to. The acquisition process is a totally creative one in which universally identified common features and patterns can be recognised. This paper is an effort to find out the linguistic features related to the first language acquisition of a child who acquires Sinhala as his mother tongue. It is a study of language development of an infant in a linguistic point of view. The research problem is to identify the linguistic features of child language acquisition. Data were collected electronically and manually in transcription. The paper discusses the structural linguistic features such as phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics in the acquisition process. In addition, theories of generative transformational grammar such as competence, performance and overgeneralisation are also discussed. Grammatical phenomena, namely simplification, addition, omission and substitution are observed as special features in the acquisition process. The findings of the study are important to psycholinguists, language therapists and researchers interested in applied linguistics.

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¹ Department of Linguistics *weerawardhana@yahoo.com
