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ON THE STATUS OF CHILD DIRECTED SPEECH: DOES MOTHERESE DETERMINE THE PROCESS OF FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION?

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to explore the idea of linguistic input basically manifested in the form of child directed speech (CDS) and its contribution to the first language acquisition. It has been proven that exposure to linguistic material is definitely needed to construct one's knowledge of language, but the actual mechanism of that linguistic exposure is not clear. Does CDS have any intrinsic qualities that can facilitate or even determine the process of first language acquisition? At first, the importance of CDS in the studies concerning language acquisition is dealt with in this paper. How different theories of language acquisition will treat CDA is discussed with the aim of revealing its function in the process of first language acquisition. The criticality of CDS is the issue that will be treated in the subsequent part of this paper. Its role with respect to the development of vocabulary and grammar in children is investigated in the final section. It is hoped that clarifying these points will contribute in determining the status of CDS in the process of first language acquisition and exhibiting its criticality in the development of language.

Keywords: *Child Directed Speech, Critical, Language Development, Syntax*

INTRODUCTION

The earliest steps to analyze the children's speech were probably the supposedly diary studies which were basically concerned with the children language development. Such studies were mainly conducted by parents (e.g. Stern and Stern, 1907). The governing assumption was that children were at the center of language learning and nearly no (or very little) account of their linguistic surrounding was needed. Linguistic environment was not considered to be an influential factor in determining the language acquisition.

In the previous decades, we have witnessed a challenge in the field of language acquisition between those who emphasized the significant role of language input (nurture) and the ones who believed that this variable was not so effective in language acquisition (nature). The idea of child directed speech (CDS) magnified the role of input in language acquisition. Gleitman *et al.*, (1984) raised the idea that certain characteristics of baby talk are essential for the occurrence of language acquisition. The reason for this idea lies in the belief that CDS or caretaker speech possesses features that distinguish it from other sorts of speech directed to older ones. This claim is rooted in the belief that child directed speech or caretakers' speech to children contains properties which facilitate the process of acquisition. Based on this view the qualities of parents' speech including the features of 'well-formedness and being in line with the child's psycholinguistic ability' (Snow and Ferguson, 1977) would accelerate the acquisition of language. To talk more specifically, we can say that the length of utterances directed to children is shorter; there are more pauses when the utterances stop, the speech is considerably slower and fluent in comparison to the speech directed to other adults. Other characteristics include higher pitch than usual and intensified intonation. As far as grammar is concerned simple and fluent forms of sentences are emphasized. The aim of these modifications of speech is to communicate more easily with children. In addition, CDS was also recognized to be greatly redundant. Mothers constantly repeat phrases and complete sentences and the sentences are paraphrased by them (Snow 1972). Actually, the emergence of the idea of CDS could be considered as a reaction against the nativists' assumptions that emphasized the innate capacities in acquiring a language. The general conclusion based on these studies indicated that the speech directed to children at the age of language learning was very different from the speech addressed to adults. Taking the nature of CDS into account, many researchers concluded that the CDS could take the place of the kind

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of language acquisition device envisioned by Chomsky (1965), toward a more general learning method that employed the rather simple, organized and redundant information accessible in the CDS. At first we try to investigate the status of linguistic input from certain perspectives.

Different Perspectives on Child Directed Speech

Child directed speech has been viewed differently from the angles of various theories. Here three perspectives on CDS are going to be dealt with, namely: The nativist, empiricist and Interactionist views on this concept will be elaborated in the following parts.

The Nativist's Idea on Linguistic Input

Chomsky (1965) mentioned the idea of supremacy of the role of nature with an emphatic tone. He supported the idea that linguistic input could not be appropriate to be utilized for language acquisition because of their degeneracy and insufficiency. He believed that children are equipped with some sort of innate capacities which would make them able to acquire the language in spite of the poor data available to them. Pinker (1994a) in the same line suggested that during the process of evolution when a person tries to adapt himself to his environment, his language which is an intrinsic capacity evolves as well. In this theory language acquisition is explained on the basis of assuming that children have innate language learning capacities that enable them to acquire language *despite* the impoverished input. This idea of language acquisition based on the innate capacities elaborates language acquisition in terms of universal grammatical principles that are set on the basis of the language-specific features in the input. Nativist linguistic theories hold that children learn through their natural ability to organize the laws of language, but cannot fully utilize this talent without the presence of other humans. This does not mean, however, that the child requires formal instruction of any sort. Chomsky claims that children are born with a hard-wired Language Acquisition Device (LAD) in their brains. They are born with the major principles of language in place, but with many parameters to set (such as whether sentences in the language(s) they are to acquire must have explicit subjects). According to nativist theory, when the young children are exposed to a language, their LAD makes it possible for them to set the parameters and deduce the grammatical principles, because the principles are innate (Bigge and Shermis, 1998).

Another supporter of this theory is Bickerton (1981) who believed that children could turn out to be qualified ones in language relying on their language capacities despite the fact that their input is simple and incomplete. Other researchers like Borer and Wexler (1987) and Pinker (1994b) similarly proposed that language principles are genetically determined for children and that quality and quantity of input doesn't matter much, because children themselves are in charge of determining the regularities of language, though such capacities need input to be triggered properly.

Even in such a view where it is claimed that linguistic input has no (or little) effect in language acquisition, we can infer the necessity of such speech in justifying the idea of innate capacity in language acquisition. The idea of *representationalism*, a term adopted from Cowie (1999) demonstrated a change from a behavioral to a mental one. It holds that mastery and acquisition of language necessitates contentful mental states and mental processes that include their manipulation.

Adult speech can have two major functions here. The first one is that it can be supplying children with feedback as whether his or her own sentences are grammatical or not. And the other one is offering input to children. As far as the feedback is concerned, such input can appear in two forms: a. *positive inputs which are* the grammatical utterances provided by adults

b. *negative inputs* which are ungrammatical utterances provided by adults

Children need to make judgments about adult utterances and recognize their grammaticality. Actually as Newport *et al.*, (1977) pointed out, adult utterances directed to children wholly contain grammatical sentences. They are much more grammatical than utterances in interactions among adults themselves. In other words, children regard adult speech as positive input rather than negative one. But the point is how do they come up with this judgment? How do they understand the grammaticality of the sentences? We have two resources for this knowledge: one is the form and the other is the meaning. The question which arises here is the place of this knowledge. Is it in the input or in the mind? We can't say it is in the input (adult speech) because it is just noise, the physical reality of the form. In other words, it is just sound

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waves. So what remain as the source of such knowledge is just mind. And definitely it resides in the mind. We can say that the meaningfulness of adult utterances is such an important factor that we cannot overlook its importance while we talk about mental processes in language acquisition. But what is the role of form (adult speech) here? Adult speech which is the positive input provides the grammatical forms, but as it was pointed out, the meanings of such grammatical forms are determined in the mind through performing computations on these grammatical forms (language input) to arrive at the meaning. So we can see that adult speech (form) is an integral part of language acquisition even in approaches where the focal factor of language acquisition is innate capacity and not environmental input.

The Empiricist View

In 1920's, we had the emergence of a psychology called behaviorism. These psychologists emphasized the significant role of the environment in the (language) learning process of the child. They consider very little internal structure to the child except overall capabilities (Ingram, 1989). B.F. Skinner is probably the most famous behaviorist who believed that children are conditioned by their environment to react to particular stimuli with language. When children speak the language of their parents they are rewarded and become more qualified. They grow in their capability to respond to the surrounding stimuli given by their parents. This forms a child's language more than knowledge of rules (Gleason and Ratner, 2009). Based on this theory (e.g. Skinner, 1957) the processes of stimulus, response, associations and reinforcement are responsible for learning all behaviors including the meaning of words and the grammar of the language. Quantity and quality of input receive little weight, but the behavior of the parent (environment) is a central point. In the more recent connectionist theories (e.g. McClelland and Rumelhart, 1986) most often connected to behaviorism, input to the neurons would definitely be viewed important.

In this view, the ability to form and understand new sentences is based on some procedures which are the building blocks of the other sorts of learning. It means that procedures such as analogy, abstraction, etc which are employed in other areas of cognitive learning are operating in learning a language as well. As far as the status of linguistic input is concerned, it holds that preliminary linguistic data is a basis on which the procedure of analogy is functioning and the outcome could be novel sorts of sentences, though it lays more emphasis on social and cognitive factors rather than linguistic input. As Bloomfield argued “ a regular analogy permits a speaker to utter speech-forms which he has not heard” (1933: 275). The behaviorists approach has been criticized for not taking into account the many and varied influences on a child's language learning.

Interactionist View

This view believes that interaction with the caregiver is a significant factor in language acquisition. Accordingly both children and adults would be participating in such a development. In other words, language input when combined with interaction can be a critical factor here. Vygotsky as a scholar in social interaction also confirmed the significant role of the language and interaction which would be leading to the overall development of children (Zaitseva *et al.*, 1999). The concept of scaffolding originated from the work of Vygotsky in addition to the studies of early language learning. Bruner (1978) asserted that for learning to happen, suitable social interactional structures must be supplied. With regard to the young child learning language, the instructional component includes the caretaker (normally the mother) supplying a structure to let the child to learn. To do this, the caretaker should always be moving one step ahead of the child (Vygotsky's *zone of proximal development*), and by employing contexts that are greatly familiar and reutilized, the caretaker can make the child's learning easier. These routines that can highly be predicted, such as reading books together or dialogs at bath time or meals, present the caretaker and child a framework within which the caregiver can constantly raise her expectations of the child's performance. For Bruner, this meant particularly the child's *linguistic* performance, because, he argued, it is within these structures that children learn how to employ language. Under this view the role of innate capacities is not so clear, though its function as a variable cannot be overlooked.

Interactive situation and language input are so interwoven that analyzing them separately sounds impossible. While reviewing the literature, we realize that in some acquisition theories, input receives little importance, whereas in others it is believed to have a crucial role if the child is likely to grow

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cognitively, emotionally and socially. To restate this opinion, we see that some theories of language acquisition give minimum importance to language input, but others consider maximum one for it, as well as the culture which determines its role to a great extent (e.g. Ochs, 1983; Schieffelin, 1985).

No one questions the fact that being exposed to at least one language is a necessity for acquiring a language (see for an overview Skuze, 1988; Mayberry and Eichen, 1991). Curtiss (1977) mentioned a case called Genie who had been deprived of language interaction. Another example was offered by Emmorey *et al.*, (1994) who talked about a 16-year old deaf girl being isolated from others. This girl based on their report started learning American Sign Language after her long deprivation of interaction. One question which can be asked here is concerned with the quantity of language input needed for acquiring a language. It is not transparent whether we have a minimum level of language input required for language development or not.

Another point regarding the language input is dealing with its quality. We have some situations where the quantity of linguistic input seems sufficient, but it has impoverished structure. The point is that there must be a balance between these two factors in the developmental stages of language acquisition. Again we would face the same question with respect to the quality. What would be the appropriate level for the quality of the language input? Do we have any certain minimum level for it?

Is CDS Critical in Language Development?

Here we encounter one fundamental question that is related to the criticality of language input. Is there a need for children to receive CDS for acquiring language? Is there a link between the sort of input they are directed to and the type of speech they are expected to produce? Is there a causal relationship between these two variables? If we can exhibit that acquisition will occur whether children are exposed to CDS or not, then a logical conclusion would be that it is not critical in language acquisition. On the other hand, if it is shown that CDS is essential in language acquisition and without it acquisition will not occur, we can come up with the point that such input is critical in this regard.

The problem could be in finding the reason for such correlation. That is the speech addressed to children may not be intended to act as a language lesson. It may not be acting as a model from which children copy their speech. Instead, it can be regarded as an attempt by adults to make their speech understandable to the children. This process is carried out through passing some modifications. In other words they try to adjust their utterances to the level of children's comprehension independently from the kind of language that children produce. Something is clear here about the necessity to have the language input. It is necessary for children to be exposed to language and CDS can be so advantageous in providing such exposure to speech community.

There are some observations which are going to undermine the idea of criticality for CDS. The results of some studies which were mainly concerned with social class and ethnic groups indicate that CDS should not be regarded as critical in language acquisition. One such study related to ethnic group exhibits that speech intonation of Japanese mothers and fathers do not change while talking to their kids (Boysson-Bardies, 1999). In addition, other studies regarding social class made it clear that specific social classes use CDS whereas no trace of such speech could be observed among other classes of the society (Pinker, 1994a).

Constant use of questions and imperative and seldom use of declaratives are some structures that are constantly used by parents, but they are not so visible in children's speech. We would come up with similar observations while investigating the patterns of verbs used by children. Again such patterns would mismatch with parents' speech, it can be logically concluded that this certain type of input does not have a critical role in language acquisition.

Taking it for granted that CDS contains structures which are finely tuned with children's level of knowledge, we see that they also use utterances which contain forms that don't comply with children's psychological capacity and as a result they are beyond the children's understanding (Pine 1994). As it was told, some instances of these problematic areas are the use of imperatives and questions by parents while directing the children. On the contrary even if CDS contains only simplified structures, Wexler and Culicover (1980) expressed that there is no justification that such simplified input would accelerate or

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speed learning. If we conclude that CDS is not so critical in language development, is it highlighting the role of innate knowledge? Pinker (1994b) attempting to show the connection between input and innate capacity asserted that acquisition device is a constituent of the mind that through interaction with the surrounding can change the language faculty into a language system or behavior.

A conclusion drawn from the above discussion is that CDS is not a critical factor in language development, but is it the reason to say that it lacks any sort of usefulness? Here we have abundance of reasons to prove its advantage. Newport *et al.*, (1977) carried out studies that indicated the direct link between addressing yes/no questions to children by parents and acquiring auxiliaries at initial stages. In addition, we can attribute the role of facilitator to CDS. Children use CDS as facilitator for segmenting the linguistic stream. Here such speech forms are being utilized by children to recognize the limits and constraints of different forms. Shady *et al.*, (1995) demonstrated that children at the age of 5 showed sensitivity to changes in pitch and prosodic structures. In other words, distinguishing these features would help children to segment and limit the linguistic structures.

The other function of CDS is its emotional role which must be paid closer attention. It can establish a friendly atmosphere to make the communication easier, but again it must be reiterated that despite its role in creating an appropriate setting for communication, it is not an integral element in language development. As Newport *et al.*, (1977) stated the mere existence of motherese cannot be expressive of its impressiveness in language development they also posed the point that motherese could generate a bilateral connection between mothers and children. Mothers could influence children by such input and at the same time be affected by children's talk.

General Assumptions on Vocabulary and Syntax Acquisition through CDS

Language learning requires understanding of both syntax as well as vocabulary; as a result, to understand the whole process of language development, it is necessary to determine the nature of both processes. However, when the linguists try to define the language development. Usually they take side with one of these variables and emphasize its role more. In other words, while explaining language acquisition, they view such development either from the view of syntax or vocabulary, but the point is that the connection between them is so complicated that we cannot express it simply in terms of priority of one over the other. These days syntactic development has received lots of attention compared with lexical development. Yet in investigating the development of language, we come up with the idea that lexical development should definitely be regarded as central because the acquiring vocabulary makes up the child's early success as a language user. So children need to acquire a specific level of vocabulary before they are able to produce sentences through combining individual words, and, in fact, in the time span when they generate single words and the stage of multiword utterances, acquisition of certain amount of vocabulary is necessary. So both deserve to be studied. As it was discussed, the role CDS based on many studies was not considered critical in language acquisition. In other words acquiring a language could be possible even through minimum amount of exposure. But what about the effect of CDS in the size of vocabulary and the complexity of the syntax that children know?

Different theories have tried to explore the nature of vocabulary and syntax in children. One major assumption is that the acquisition of vocabulary may be due to variables other than language faculty and as a result the process of the acquisition of vocabulary gets different from that of syntax. Computations would make up the building block for Syntacticians, while for those who investigate the vocabulary acquisition the idea of cognition gets significant. This problematic area has given rise to serious discussion between Jean Piaget and Noam Chomsky (constructivism vs. nativism). The findings of linguists in this respect are in compliance with the given idea. These studies indicate that despite the remarkable similarities between syntax and lexical development; they follow two different mental processes. We have evidence that syntax knowledge gets nearly complete by the age 5, while the acquisition of vocabulary is a steady process which continues in one's lifetime.

Vocabulary Development

As we have seen, significant differences between syntax and vocabulary could be observed. With respect to the words, we can say that individuals don't show uniformity. Contrary to syntactic development,

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which is said to be alike across individuals, there are remarkable differences across individuals in vocabulary knowledge, both in grownups and children (McCarthy, 1954). In addition, at least up to a certain age, general intelligence is the main variable which determines the differences among individuals regarding the knowledge of vocabulary (e.g., Dupuy, 1974; Raven, 1948; Terman, 1918; Wechsler, 1949), in addition to a bunch of linguistic and cognitive capacities such as reading comprehension (see Anderson and Freebody, 1981).

Language development is so fast at first years for a child. When an ordinary child reaches the age 2, he or she has acquired around 900 basic vocabularies (Carey, 1978) and nearly a fundamental syntax (Brown, 1973). It is not clear that what could be the main reasons for differences among individuals in the development of vocabulary. It is basically believed that the main roots of individual differences in vocabulary development originate from their different abilities to learn from their surrounding speech. That is, individuals have different readiness with regard to learning vocabulary. Different studies have attempted to account for such variation among individuals. Some assert that especially at the start of language learning, innate preparedness surely plays a role in acquiring word meanings because inferences about meanings are based on pairings of words with situations. As Quine (1969) has persuasively argued, the variety of aspects of a situation which might be encoded by a word is enormous. Because of this, Gleitman and Wanner (1982) point out, it seems critical to posit innately available constraints on the possible meanings children entertain.

If we have this internal preparedness for learning words, can we say it is the fundamental factor with regard to the learning of vocabulary? As far as the growth of vocabulary is concerned, we observe the variation in the amount of vocabulary that children know before the age of school (Fenson *et al.*, (1994) Rowe *et al.*, (2012) what could account for such variability. Some contradictory results obtained from studies on children vocabulary growth. On one hand the quantity of CDS regardless of other factors is a significant element in the size of vocabulary. In other words, more exposures to CDS will increase the amount of words that children know (Huttenlocher *et al.*, 1991). Here we have some studies that show a correlation between the economic level of learners and their size of vocabulary as well. They assert that typically, the level of families' economic level will influence their amount of CDS and consequently children in lower state of economy know less vocabulary than others before school entry (Hart and Risley, 1995).

They believed that the amount of exposure would be a decisive factor in vocabulary development. In contrast, we have other people holding that there is no dispute about the necessity to be exposed to the words of a language to acquire it, children who don't have any interaction with others do not acquire language. But they raise a question on the exposure as a critical factor in the size of vocabulary that children acquire. There is a controversy on this issue. Despite the former studies which suggested that differences in exposure patterns under normal conditions may influence the pace of vocabulary growth, these studies show no systematic evidence is advocating this idea.

Concerning the variation in vocabulary growth, they claim that it is likely that the level of exposure would affect the acquisition of vocabulary, but the reason lies in the fact that through more exposure, children will have a chance to strengthen the connections between sounds and meanings. Furthermore, exposure may have an indirect effect where reflection on earlier exposure, may increase the ability to learn new words. This indirect effect of exposure might enhance the degree of reflection on previous learning and consequently facilitates the learning of new items. We should also know that vocabulary size can play a fundamental role in the subsequent success at school (Anderson and Freebody, 1981). As a result it deserves to study the existing difference.

We could follow and investigate two types of elements determining such a difference. One sort of difference according to Stromswold (2001) is concerned with individual differences among children such as heredity and the other kind is claimed to be linked with environmental factors, mainly the speech directed to children. In the following paragraphs we want to examine the relative importance of these variables in the development of vocabulary and to what extent they could explain observed differences in vocabulary size in children before the school age.

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Accepting that exposure is influential in vocabulary development, we would realize that there is a correlation between CDS and word growth. But why is it so? What causes such association between these two variables? One potential answer can be heredity which can act as the third element to account for such causation. It means that talkativeness is a quality that is transferred from mothers to children; nevertheless, evidence to reinforce such correlation is not so strong. In fact we can't claim that the size of utterances addressed to children would be really expressive of the parent's own vocabulary size. The words being addressed to children by parents are just a subcategory of what they actually have (Broen, 1972) and contain some familiar words to all parents.

The other potential element which is going to elaborate such causation is the opposite of the direction mentioned above. That is more able children require more talkativeness on the part of parents. However, strong evidence is not accessible to justify this view. We have stability in the relative size of the speech of certain parents at particular initial stages of language learning (Nelson and Bonvillian, 1973). We have similar phenomenon even before children start talking and show their knowledge of word (Cohen & Beckwith, 1976; Moss, 1967). Studies by Smolak and Weinraub (1983) showed that at a specific time span, mothers of children who were linguistically very qualified generated remarkable more speech both to their own children and similarly to other children who differed linguistically from their one ones. This was indicative of their speech production stability over a particular period of time. What we can conclude is that parent's talkativeness is an independent variable only belonging to the parents irrespective of the speech size of their children.

More studies were conducted to account for the role of heredity as a potential factor responsible for variation in vocabulary growth. (Carter, 1932; De Fries *et al.*, 1976; Park *et al.*, 1978; Scarr and Weisberg, 1978; Williams, 1975) expressed that only around 10-12% such variation in children vocabulary could be attributed to the influence of parent speech. Scarr and Weisberg (1978) found that biological and adoptive mothers showed the same correlation with regard to the tests on vocabulary. These findings could exhibit the fact that exposure and environmental input had more significant role in the growth and development of vocabulary than heredity.

In conclusion we can say that acquiring vocabulary is a complicated task. It requires the formation of concepts through connecting sounds to the meanings. It is clear that exposure to linguistic input is an essential stage in vocabulary development, but there is a controversy over the role of CDS on the size of vocabulary that children know. Some studies attribute no important role to this kind of speech, while other studies show that CDS is absolutely critical on the growth of vocabulary before the age of school.

Syntax Development

With respect to language development in children we can say that it sounds most relevant to analyze CDS to determine how it could supply information about syntactic structures. The child's fundamental job is considered as one of testing many different hypotheses with respect to the syntax of the language being acquired against the structures seen in the input, and consequently eliminating the wrong hypotheses. Under this perspective, the acquisition of syntax and semantics are two separate tasks.

Macnamara (1972) asserted that this perspective on language acquisition was wrong; he believed that what children need to be to gather information about the link between syntactic frameworks and semantic forms to acquire the syntax. To restate it, we can say that children guess the rules under syntactic structures by using signals supplied by the meaning of an adult speech. Macnamara proposed that knowledge of the meaning of significant words, plus knowledge of what is supposed to be told about those items or actions given the situation, must make the child capable of guessing appropriately what the meanings of utterances are. This suggests that adults must also say the sorts of things the child expects to encounter, that both adults and children must have a common way of viewing the world.

A critical point regarding the development of syntax in children is to specify it in terms of innate capacity or language input. While we have the recognition that the development of syntax structure in children is dependent on universal constraints, it is also confirmed that language input is playing an integral part here. Studies concerning the syntax have concentrated on some common points among children (cf. Brown, 1973; De Villiers & De Villiers, 1978). It is said that specific predictable stages are followed by

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ordinary children and at initial stages they control the main syntactic structures of simple sentences. Despite these common points, it is possible to observe individual differences in children. Some studies show that at early levels, the rate and the course of acquisition are the areas in which we can observe individual differences (e.g., Fenson *et al.*, 1994; Miller & Chapman, 1981). In contrast, in the subsequent levels, more complicated aspects of syntax would cause such differences.

Is environment an effective factor in the development of syntax? To what extent can we say that CDS can determine the course of syntactic development? Studies exhibit that such correlation can be recognized between specific sides of syntax and language input but it cannot be generalized to include all dimensions (e.g., Barnes *et al.*, 1983; Furrow *et al.*, 1979; Gleitman *et al.*, 1984; Newport *et al.*, 1977). It seems that the aspects of child speech that show a relation to input would necessarily depend on the child's language level. In this context, the result of a study carried out by Newport *et al.*, (1977), showed that specific sides of children's production were not related to their parents' speech. They announced that certain noun and verb phrases in the utterance of children were not in accordance with their parent's speech. One potential justification for the visible mismatch of input is that such noun and verb phrases are indicative of the child's use of universal aspects of language structure (Newport *et al.*, 1977) and are not really connected to differences in input. However, such matters maybe due to the child's syntactic skill level through a certain age.

Conclusion

Every normal child needs a natural language. A child hears sentences of the target language and uses this raw substance to produce a system that makes the child able to generate sentences of his/her own. A child may have exposure to a variety of different sources containing a large size of variations in phonology, lexis and grammar. Each of these remarkable inputs generates a distinctive output (Foster-Cohen, 2009). Therefore, the input to the child possesses a remarkable similarity to the final outcome of the child development. Every child can learn various languages with equal ease and consequently become polylingual, if the child has exposure to the languages (Foster-Cohen 2009). Environmental inputs are a basic element in child language development. Yet, a crucial question is how and to what extent input in the form of motherese can account for the child's construction of grammar and vocabulary, and whether there are other variables that may contribute to the process of acquisition. Is CDS critical in the acquisition of syntax and grammar? It is reemphasized that linguistic input is essential for language acquisition, unless children have exposure to language, they will not acquire it. Still, whereas linguistic input is required for language acquisition, it is less transparent whether Child Directed Speech (CDS) is essential. This paper wanted to explain CDS's idea and its special place in the area of first language acquisition, as well as its potentiality in the acquisition of vocabulary and syntax. In addition, it discussed CDS with regard to relevant theories and studied its role in acquisition of a first language based on the views of different theories. As a general goal it tried to exhibit the relative position of CDS in the process of first language acquisition and its criticality in this respect.

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