

Evaluation of Language Disorder in Children - A Case Study of Gboko Central Primary School Pupils, Benue State, Nigeria

Oryina Bestman Shar-Adura¹, Linda Doom Asongo¹, Emmanuella Nguvese Gbaa^{1*}, Kulenen Pilaku¹, Serumun Solomon Anyam¹

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ABSTRACT

Language disorders or language impairments are disorders that involve the processing of linguistic information. Problems that may be experienced can involve grammar (syntax and/or morphology), semantics (meaning), or other aspects of language. These problems may be receptive (involving impaired language comprehension), expressive (involving language production), or a combination of both. The fact that some children fail to acquire language abilities is the central concern of this research and is being identified as the major problem and subject of investigation in this study. The study adopts Chomsky's theory of Universal Grammar. The interesting principle of this theory that makes it suitable for being a framework for this study is that it posits that children go through stages of language development, and the "mistakes" they make during this time only reveal their development stage, but during their maturation, they are resistant to correction. The evaluation was done in the semantic phonological and syntactic areas of language, including stuttering analysis. The information gathered shows that children are affected by various language disorders and degrees. The research suggests that parents should be sensitized to examine the language acquisition stages of their children so as to identify any disorder early as this is important for intervention and remedy. Although this school is not a special kind for this defect, the study is carried out to ascertain language disorder among these pupils.

INTRODUCTION

Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2011) assert that "the myths and religion of many people hold that language is the source of life and powder. To some people of Africa, a newborn child is a "thing" not yet a person. Only by the act of learning language does the child become a human being". According to this tradition, we all become humans because we all know at least one language. The acquisition of this language which is seen as a purely human and non- instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols according to Sapir (1921) as quoted in Omachonu (2011) becomes difficult for some children. Children's inability to acquire language at the right stage in their development is termed language disorder. A language disorder can be defined as a significant delay in the use and or understanding of spoken or written language. The disorder may involve the form of language (Phonology, Syntax and Morphology), its content or meaning (semantics) and its use in social context (Pragmatics) American Speech Language Association (1993). Language disorder is a phenomenon in every Linguistic community. Because language is the major source of communication or expression of ideas, feelings and thought, its disorder in children therefore handicaps them in these area. Language disorder makes children a liability instead of asset to a linguistic community as it becomes difficult for them to communicate effectively (Jibrin *et al.*, 2024). The effect of this menace dehumanizes the child and makes his or her entire development a disgrace to humanity; Human

beings have language and effectively communicate.

Communication is, therefore, one of the most human characteristics. Thus, it becomes worrisome and an issue of great concern when a child fails to develop this fundamental human attribute. This could also be traced to debate of several researchers about the impact of using English as a foreign language (EFL) and also the use of native language in classroom environment (Sadiqi, 2024). It is against this above background that this study is interested in researching the topic "Evaluation of Language Disorder in Children." This study intends to make suggestions on preventive measures and an effective management plan.

Most children acquire language without problems while others find this very difficult. Children's failure to acquire language at the expected stages of language acquisition is the central concern of this research and is being identified as the major problem and subject of investigation in this study. Whereas other children appear to master language skill easily, some children are comparatively slow language learners and in some cases fail to attain normal adult-like language abilities. This research has taken upon itself the responsibility to make enquiries so as to discover the factors responsible for this occurrence in child language development.

The study will focus broadly on evaluation of language disorder in children to determine if children within the age range at stake are faced with the challenges of language disorder in the designated area for this study. The research assess some challenges of language disorder in children, ascertain if children with language disorder

¹ Benue State University, Benue, Nigeria

* Corresponding author's e-mail: gbaemmanuella@gmail.com

have the same areas of deficit, identify the conditions that expose children to language disorder and determines the remedy for language disorder.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adapts a survey design technique through a cross-sectional approach. Here, what would happen to the sample subjects is paramount and will be observed without any attempt to manipulate or control (Asika 2001). The approach includes descriptive exploration and explanation designs. The variables are observed independently and in different classes (primary 1, 2, and 3), and explanations are offered based on the observations. The data employed in this study is purely primary data. The targeted population for the study are pupils within the age range of 5- 7 years, whose understudy are taken from primary 1, 2 and 3. In terms of geographical scope, the study covers a central primary school in Gboko town of Gboko Local Government area in Benue state. Although this primary school is not a special school for the “Language Disordered”, the study seeks to investigate cases of language disorder among its pupils. The study has selected three (3) classes from the study area (Gboko central primary school). The selected classes have pupils whose ages fall within the range of 5-7 years. The

selected classes are primary (1), primary (2) and primary three (3). Out of the three classes, 40 pupils were selected from each class making a total sampling size of The kind of data to be observed and discussed covers bio-demographic data like sex and age of the respondents. Data would be sourced on language disorder in children in the study area (Gboko central primary school) the data will be on the following areas of language; phonology, syntax and semantics.

The instrument used in data collection is interview, picture identification, explanation and personal observation in depth administered to the respondents which are pupils of primary 1, 2 and 3. Data was collected on two main variables as captured by the topic “language disorder in children” (5-7 years). Primary data was collected through the instrument of interview, Picture identification and personal observation. Data was also collected using secondary sources like texts books, journals and the internet. Both the qualitative and quantitative methods were used in analyzing the data generated, the qualitative technique involved discussion and elaboration of findings. Quantitative tools like tabulation and sample percentage were used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Table 1: Location and Sex of Respondents

S/NO	Location	Male	Female	Total
1	Primary 1	17	23	40
2	Primary 2	19	21	40
3	Primary 3	16	24	40
4	Total	52	68	120

The above table shows the location and sex of pupils who responded to the exercise. In primary 1, it shows that 17 pupils are male while 23 of them are female. In

primary 2, 19 of the pupils are male while 21 of them are female. In primary 3, the table shows that 16 of the pupils are male while the remaining 24 are female.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

S/NO	Age distribution	Frequency	Percentage
1	5 years	30	25.00
2	6 years	50	41.67
3	7 years	40	33.33
	Total	120	100

The above table shows the age distribution of the respondent from 5 to 7 years old. 25 percent of the respondents are 5 years old and 41.67 percent of the

respondents are 6 years old while the remaining 33.33 are 7 years old. The age distribution as considered above is an important factor of this study.

Table 3: Phonological Disorder Analysis in the Respondents

S/NO	Status	Frequency	Percentage
1	Affected	25	20.83
2	Unaffected	95	79.16
3	Total	120	100

Phonological disorder analysis was carried on the respondent and the analysis shows that 20.83 percentage of the respondent are those who could not show the difference between /l/ sound as in

'lion' and /r/ sound as in 'river' thereby using the two interchangeably. The remaining 79.16 are those who were not affected or disordered in any of the sounds that reflected in the test.

Table 4: Semantic Disorder Analysis in the Respondent

S/NO	Status	Frequency	Percentage
1	Affected	14	11.66
2	Unaffected	106	88.34
3	Total	120	100

The above table shows the percentage of the respondents after a semantic disorder analysis. 14 percent of the respondents could not associate the correct meaning

to pictures and could not identify lexical or structural ambiguities. The remaining 83.34 percentage of the respondent were not affected.

Table 5: Syntactic Disorder Analysis

S/NO	Status	Frequency	Percentage
1	Affected	25	20.83
2	Unaffected	95	79.16
3	Total	120	100

The above table shows the percentage of respondents after a syntactic disorder analysis was carried on them. The table shows that 10 percent of the respondents were affected i.e. they did not know the difference of past,

present and present continuous tenses, they used them interchangeably, while the remaining 90 percent that makes a total of 108 pupils were not affected.

Table 6: Stuttering Analysis among the Respondents

S/NO	Status	Frequency	Percentage
1	Affected	10	8.33
2	Unaffected	110	91.66
3	Total	120	100

The above shows the percentage of respondents after a stuttering analysis was administered on the 8.33 percent that make up a total number of 10 pupils were affected (stuttered) while the remaining 91.66 percent made up of a total number of 110 pupils were not affected by stuttering.

of the respondents (10 percent) were affected, while the remaining 108 of the respondents (90 percent) of the respondents were not disordered in syntax. Lastly, in the stuttering analysis among the respondents 10 of them were affected (8.33 percent) while 110 of the respondents (91.66 percent) were not affected. Judging from this fact, it will not be out of place to conclude that some children have challenge of language disorder thereby answering the first research question. The data presented and analyzed also shows that children who have challenges of language disorder do not have the same areas of deficit as seen in the above tables; the respondents were affected by various language disorder. Researchers try to identify environmental and genetic factors that play a part in the development of language disorders which typically manifest in childhood, but can occur at any age. Brain injury or head trauma, neurological disorders, Down syndrome and autism are conditions that predispose children to language disorder. Some practices by expectant mothers like alcoholism and smoking are harmful to the unborn child and may hamper his or her language development after birth. Language disorder is remediable but early identification is a key to its management and successful treatment depends on the severity of the

Discussion

Based on the presentation in the above tables, it has been discovered that 50.82 percent of the 120 respondents were affected variously with language disorders. The remaining 69.18 percent were not affected by any of the disorders in the evaluation. It then becomes, pertinent to note that it cannot just be concluded judging from this findings that there were no language disorders in the population. Therefore this study concludes that they were varying languages disorders and degrees in the respondents The data collected in the above table shows that in the phonological analysis, 25 (2.83 percent) of the respondent were affected while 95 (19.17 percent) of the respondents were not affected. In the semantic analysis, 14 of the respondents (11.66 percent) were affected while 106 of the respondents (88.34 percent) were not affected. The syntactic disorder analysis shows that 12

language disorder. Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) are critical in the treatment of language disorders. They educate parents and teachers by helping them identify problems early on.

CONCLUSION

This study has been able to evaluate language disorder in Gboko Central Primary School, Benue state. The study shows that some children have challenges of language disorder with varying degrees and area of deficit. A review of existing literature relating to this study has shown that early intervention will help a great deal in remediating the disorders. Judging from data gather from the respondents, it will not be out of place to conclude that they have not been any case of server language disorder in the population (5-7 year old pupils of Gboko central primary school). At this juncture, it becomes pertinent to note that Gboko central primary school which is the location of the study's population is not a special school for the language disorder.

Recommendation

Though this study has been successfully carried out and concluded, its findings are not paramount. There is every need for language researchers to do further investigations on language disorder in children. This study only represents an attempt to evaluate language disorder in children. Therefore other attempts can make meaningful contributions to the research which is on the continuum concerning child language disorder. However, the data presented in this study necessitates my recommendation that parents should be sensitized to monitor their children's language development stages. Only this can help early detection and intervention which is necessary for remediation.

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