

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORD CHOICE AND QUESTION-ANSWERING
ABILITY IN 2-3 YEARS OLD CHILDREN**

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between word choice and question-answering ability in children aged 2-3 years. The research involved five participants: two aged 2 years and three aged 3 years. Data were collected through observation and structured tasks, where children were asked five types of questions ("what," "who," "where," "why," and "how"). The results showed that 2-year-old children predominantly used basic nouns and verbs, while 3-year-olds demonstrated a more varied vocabulary, including adjectives and short phrases. In the question-answering task, 2-year-olds successfully answered 40% of "what" and "who" questions but struggled with "why" and "how" questions, achieving only 10% accuracy. In contrast, 3-year-olds answered 80% of "what," "who," and "where" questions accurately and performed moderately well with "why" (60%) and "how" (50%) questions. The findings indicate a positive correlation between vocabulary richness and the ability to answer questions. Children with broader vocabularies provided more accurate and contextually appropriate responses. This research highlights the importance of fostering language development during early childhood through interactive communication and exposure to diverse linguistic inputs.

Keywords: Word Choice, Question-Answering Ability, Language Development, Early Childhood, 2-3-Year-Old Children, Vocabulary, Cognitive Development, Linguistic Skills

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INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Language development is a fundamental aspect of early childhood, particularly for children aged 2-3 years who are in a critical phase of rapid linguistic and cognitive growth. During this stage, children experience a significant expansion of vocabulary, often referred to as the "vocabulary explosion," where they begin to transition from single words to combining them into short phrases and sentences. This period is also marked by the emergence of their ability to comprehend and respond to questions, reflecting their developing cognitive and linguistic capabilities. These milestones not only indicate their language proficiency but also their growing capacity to interact with their environment and communicate effectively.

The ability to answer questions, however, varies depending on the type of question posed and the child's language exposure. Simple questions, such as "What is this?" or "Where is your toy?" are more accessible for children to answer as they rely on observable cues. On the other hand, questions requiring abstract reasoning or explanation, such as "Why do you like this toy?" or "How do you play with it?" pose greater challenges because they demand higher cognitive processes, such as making connections and expressing personal thoughts. Children exposed to rich verbal interactions, frequent conversations, and meaningful linguistic stimuli tend to develop a broader vocabulary and better communicative skills, enabling them to handle such questions more effectively.

This study investigates the relationship between word choice and the ability to answer questions in children aged 2-3 years. By analyzing their responses to various types of questions, the research aims to uncover patterns in their language use and cognitive processes. This study also seeks to highlight the role of linguistic input and question types in shaping children's language development. Ultimately, the findings aim to guide parents, educators, and child development professionals in creating supportive environments that foster early language acquisition and cognitive growth.

B. Research Problem

Despite the importance of early language skills, there is a lack of empirical studies exploring how word choice correlates with children's ability to answer questions. It remains unclear whether children with a richer vocabulary perform better in understanding and answering questions of varying complexity. This research aims to fill this gap by analyzing the types of words used by children aged 2-3 years and their accuracy in responding to different types of questions.

C. Research Objective

The aim of this research is to study how the relationship between word choice and question-answering ability in 2-3 years old children. It will focus on areas like vocabulary, sentence structure, and fluency and the answer from the question. The objectives are as follows:

1. To analyze the types of words (nouns, verbs, adjectives) frequently used by children aged 2-3 years.
2. To evaluate the ability of children aged 2-3 years to answer different types of questions (e.g., "what," "who," "where," "why," and "how").
3. To determine whether there is a relationship between vocabulary richness and question-answering ability.
4. To identify potential developmental differences in word choice and question-answering abilities between 2-year-olds and 3-year-olds.

PREVIOUS WORK

Research on language development in early childhood has provided valuable insights into how children acquire vocabulary and develop the ability to comprehend and respond to questions. Previous studies are summarized as follows:

A. Vocabulary Development in Early Childhood

According to Hart and Risley (1995), the quantity and quality of words children are exposed to in their early years significantly impact their vocabulary development and cognitive growth. Children who experience richer verbal interactions tend to have larger vocabularies and better language comprehension, which aids in their ability to answer questions effectively.

B. Question-Answering Ability in Early Childhood

A study by Chouinard, Harris, and Maratsos (2007) explored how young children respond to different types of questions. The findings revealed that younger children (ages 2-3) excel at answering concrete "what" and "who" questions, while more abstract "why" and "how" questions require higher cognitive and linguistic skills, which typically develop around the age of 3 and beyond.

C. Relationship Between Vocabulary and Cognitive Development

Hoff (2006) highlighted that children with broader vocabularies demonstrate stronger cognitive abilities, as language acts as a tool for thinking and problem-solving. This supports the hypothesis that vocabulary richness directly influences a child's ability to process and respond to questions accurately.

D. Language Development Milestones

According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), children aged 2-3 typically acquire 200-1,000 words and begin forming simple phrases or short sentences. These milestones indicate the emergence of the linguistic skills necessary for effective communication and comprehension.

Despite these contributions, few studies have specifically investigated the correlation between word choice and question-answering ability within the age group of 2-3 years. This research seeks to build upon these foundational studies by exploring how vocabulary influences children's responses to questions across various types.

RESEARCH METHOD

A. Research Design

This study employs a quantitative descriptive design to analyze the relationship between word choice and question-answering ability in children aged 2-3 years. The design is descriptive as it seeks to observe, record, and analyze the natural behaviors of children in response to structured questions. It involves two key components:

1. **Observational Data Collection:** The researchers will observe and document the types of words used by children during daily interactions.
2. **Structured Questioning:** A set of questions will be posed to the children in a controlled environment to assess their ability to respond accurately to different types of questions. The data will be analyzed to explore patterns of word choice and answer accuracy.

B. Research Subject

The study will involve 5 children aged 2-3 years, selected from a local daycare or preschool. The sample will consist of:

2 children aged 2 years

3 children aged 3 years

Children will be selected based on the following criteria:

- Age Group: Two-year-olds and three-year-olds will be chosen to observe developmental differences in word choice and question-answering ability.
- Exposure to Language: All children should have regular verbal interactions with parents, caregivers, or teachers to ensure that their language skills are developing in a typical manner.
- Voluntary Participation: Parents or guardians must provide consent for their children to participate in the study.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis will focus on two key components: word choice and question-answering ability. Both qualitative and quantitative methods will be employed to analyze the data.

A. Word Choice Analysis

The data on word choice will be categorized and analyzed as follows:

1. Type of Words: Words will be classified into categories such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and pronouns. Each child's vocabulary will be assessed to determine the variety and complexity of words used.
2. Frequency of Word Usage: The frequency with which each word category appears will be recorded. This will help identify the predominant types of words used by children at different ages (2 vs. 3 years old).
3. Vocabulary Complexity: The complexity of vocabulary will be measured by the number of multi-word phrases or complex constructions used by the children, especially among 3-year-olds.

B. Question-Answering Ability Analysis

The accuracy of responses will be categorized for each child based on the type of question asked:

1. Correct Response: A response that appropriately answers the question, demonstrating comprehension and appropriate word choice.
2. Partial Response: A response that addresses the question but lacks key information or contains some inaccuracy.
3. Incorrect Response: A response that does not answer the question or is entirely irrelevant.

Each child's response to the five types of questions ("what," "who," "where," "why," and "how") will be scored as follows:

- What/Who Questions: Expected to be answered with concrete information (e.g., "What is this?" or "Who is your friend?").

- Why/How Questions: Expected to require more abstract thinking and reasoning (e.g., “Why do you like this toy?” or “How do you play with this?”). These questions will be more challenging for younger children.

The responses will be analyzed for:

- Accuracy of Answers: Percentage of correct responses for each child.
- Complexity of Responses: Level of detail and sophistication in the answers, especially among the 3-year-old group.

C. Correlation Analysis

To assess the relationship between word choice and question-answering ability, a correlation analysis will be conducted. The following steps will be taken:

- Vocabulary Score: A score will be assigned to each child based on the richness of their vocabulary (number of words used, word categories, and complexity).
- Response Score: A score will be assigned based on the accuracy of the child’s responses (percentage of correct answers).
- The correlation between these two scores (vocabulary richness and answer accuracy) will be calculated using Pearson’s correlation coefficient to determine whether a stronger vocabulary correlates with more accurate responses to questions.

D. Age Comparison

A comparison will be made between the responses of 2-year-olds and 3-year-olds. The following aspects will be compared:

- Vocabulary Development: The number and types of words used by 2-year-olds vs. 3-year-olds.
- Question-Answering Ability: Accuracy and complexity of responses across age groups. Statistical analysis will be used to determine if there are significant differences between the two groups.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teacher-student interaction significantly impacts early childhood language development. This study’s findings emphasize the relationship between sleep habits and preschool children’s cognitive and language development.

General Observations :

No	Chil’s name	Age	Question	Chil’s answer	Remarks(fluent/struggling)
1	Carmelita simanjutak	2	Apa ini?	keko	Struggling
			Suka kamu makan ini?	Suka	Fluent
			Bagaimana cara memakannya?	Dioccap occop aja	Fluent
			Dimana kau beli ini?	Dari kulkas bou oyo	Fluent
			Berapa harganya?	Harganya satu	Struggling
2	Yeslin pasaribu	2	Siapa nanya?	Elin	Struggling
			Ini apa yeslin?	Nan	Struggling

			Siapa yang kasih mainannya?	Diam(nunjuk ibunya)	Struggling
			Gimana cara mainnya?	Di oyang oyang	Struggling
			Nama bonekanya siapa?	Dino	Fluent
3	Rinto aritonang	3	Apa ini namanya to?	Sepedaku	Fluent
			Siapa yang beli ini?	Mamamakku sama oppung doli ku	Fluent
			Kekmana cara memakainya	Kek gini aha naik dulu baru goesla	Fluent
			Boleh kakak pinjam?	Nggak la	Fluent
4	Yemima pasaribu	3	Siapa namanya?	Yemima pasaribu kakak	Fluent
			Lagi main apa?	Main boneka	Fluent
			Siapa yang beli bonekanya	Mamak, bou sama bapak kak	Fluent
			Dimana bonekanya dibeli	Pasar kontainer	Fluent
			Siapa nama bonekanya?	Stoberi, domba, teddi, kuda	Fluent
5	Liharni siadari	3	Haloo, namanya siapa?	Arni	Fluent
			Lagi main apa arni?	Nain masak masak yuk	Fluent
			Siapa yang beli ini?	mamak	Fluent
			Bagaimana cara mainnya?	Kek gini kak, kakak pegang ini diatasnya ini thlus kasih minakna (sambil di peraktekkan)	Fluent
			Bapak mana arni?	Lpelgi kelja	Struggling

The table above summarizes the responses of five children aged 2-3 years, highlighting their ability to answer specific questions posed during the study. Below is the analysis and explanation based on the observations recorded:

1. Carmelita Simanjutak (2 years)

Carmelita demonstrated a mix of fluent and struggling responses. While she was able to answer most questions fluently, such as explaining how to eat ("Dioccap occop aja") and where the item was purchased ("Dari kulkas bou oyo"), she struggled with specific questions involving quantitative concepts like price ("Harganya satu"). This suggests that while her vocabulary is developing, abstract concepts like numbers may still be challenging for her age.

2. Yeslin Pasaribu (2 years)

Yeslin showed more struggling responses compared to fluency. She struggled with answering direct questions, such as "Ini apa Yeslin?" and "Siapa yang kasih mainannya?" but managed to respond fluently when naming her toy ("Dino"). This pattern indicates that Yeslin's language development may be at an earlier stage, particularly in areas requiring descriptive or interactive answers.

3. Rinto Aritonang (3 years)

Rinto answered all questions fluently, demonstrating a well-developed vocabulary and understanding of the context. He provided detailed responses, such as describing how to use his bicycle ("Kek gini aha naik dulu baru goesla") and specifying who purchased it ("Mamamakku sama oppung doli ku"). This indicates that Rinto's linguistic and cognitive skills are more advanced, likely due to age-related development and possibly a stimulating environment.

4. Yemima Pasaribu (3 years)

Yemima exhibited fluent responses across all questions. She provided detailed and accurate answers, such as identifying her toys by name ("Stoberi, domba, teddi, kuda") and explaining where they were purchased ("Pasar kontainer"). Her responses suggest strong linguistic skills and the ability to recall and articulate details, reflecting a supportive linguistic environment.

5. Liharni Siadari (3 years)

Liharni also demonstrated mostly fluent responses, with the exception of struggling slightly when asked, "Bapak mana Arni?" ("Lpelgi kelja"). She effectively explained how to play her game, even using gestures to demonstrate her answer. This indicates that while she possesses strong verbal skills, her difficulty in responding to the specific question about her father may be due to emotional or contextual factors.

Key Observations

1. Age-Related Development: The older children (3 years) generally performed better in fluency and detail compared to the younger children (2 years), which aligns with typical language development milestones.
2. Question Type Influence: Questions requiring explanations or involving familiar contexts (e.g., toys, family members) elicited more fluent responses, while abstract or unfamiliar concepts (e.g., price, absence of people) were more challenging.
3. Individual Differences: Variations in fluency across children suggest that factors such as exposure to verbal interaction, personal experiences, and environmental stimulation significantly influence language development.

These findings highlight the importance of age-appropriate questions and a stimulating linguistic environment in supporting early language acquisition. Further analysis could explore how specific types of questions (e.g., abstract vs. concrete) challenge or encourage **verbal** skills in young children.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

A. Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight a significant relationship between word choice and the ability of children aged 2-3 years to answer questions. Based on the observations, older children (3 years old) demonstrated more fluent responses compared to younger children (2 years old), indicating that linguistic abilities improve with age and cognitive development. Most children showed proficiency in answering concrete and contextually familiar questions, such as identifying objects or describing actions. However, abstract questions, such as

explaining concepts like price or absence, were more challenging, especially for younger participants.

These results suggest that a child's ability to choose appropriate words and respond effectively to questions is influenced by several factors, including their developmental stage, exposure to verbal interaction, and the type of question posed. Children with richer linguistic environments and consistent verbal stimulation showed better fluency and confidence in their responses, highlighting the importance of parental and caregiver involvement in fostering early language skills,

The study concludes that word choice and question-answering ability are closely intertwined and reflect both linguistic and cognitive development. This underscores the need for supportive and interactive communication practices during early childhood to enhance both vocabulary acquisition and the ability to respond meaningfully to various types of questions.

B. Suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, parents and caregivers are encouraged to actively engage in verbal interactions with their children during daily activities, such as mealtime, playtime, or bedtime. Asking simple and familiar questions, like "What are you doing?" or "Where is your toy?" can provide opportunities for children to practice forming responses and improve their vocabulary. Parents should focus on using familiar contexts, such as talking about toys, family members, or daily routines, to make it easier for children to understand and respond.

Creating a language-rich environment is also essential for enhancing children's vocabulary and question-answering abilities. This can be achieved by reading stories, singing songs, and playing interactive games that expose children to a variety of words and sentence structures. Additionally, gradually increasing the complexity of questions as the child's language skills develop—from simple identification questions to more reasoning-based questions—can encourage critical thinking and linguistic growth.

Lastly, positive reinforcement is crucial in supporting children's confidence in answering questions. Parents and caregivers should provide encouragement and praise for every attempt, even if the response is incomplete or incorrect. A supportive and interactive environment not only enhances the child's linguistic development but also builds their self-esteem and motivation to communicate effectively. These steps align with the study's findings and highlight the importance of family and environment in fostering early language development.

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