
The Quantity and Quality of Working and Non-Working Mothers' Speech to Their 2-3 Year Old Children in Kediri

Rozzy Constantia

Layli Hamida

English Department, Universitas Airlangga

Abstract

This study aims at describing and explaining the working and non-working mothers' speech to their 2-3 year old children in Indonesia. Specifically, it focuses on finding out the quality and quantity of both mothers' speech as the verbal input in their children's first language acquisition. The writer takes interest in this topic because there is assumption that working mothers might have less quantity and quality of speech to their 2-3 year old children than the non-working ones due to the limited time to spend and interact with them. In conducting this research, the writer collected the recorded natural conversations between four pairs of participants in 60 minutes; transcribed the conversations orthographically; counted the number of utterances and words in mothers' speech to find its quantity; counted the number of word types and mothers' MLU to find its quality. The findings show that the working mothers have more quantity and quality of speech than the non-working ones. They spoke more utterances and words, used more different word types, and spoke longer utterances to their 2-3 year old than the non-working mothers.

Keywords: working mothers, non-working mothers, children language acquisition, input quantity, input quality

Introduction

Mother as the main caregiver of children in the family has important role in their first language acquisition. Mother's speech is the verbal input in children lexical or vocabulary acquisition. Language is carefully presented to children by the people around them (Bruner in Bjorklund, 2005). The caregiver regulates not only regulates the amount of stimulation but also the timing (Owen, 2008). Therefore, caregivers don't give the language input randomly. They suited their speech as input to their children current abilities.

At this moment mothers as women have significant role changing in the society. Many mothers now apparently have a job and go to work. The writer has not found yet any statistic source which clearly states the number of working mothers in Indonesia. However, based on booklet entitled *Trends of the Selected Socio-Economic Indicators of Indonesia* (2013) by BPS Indonesia, the writer found out that the number of 30-39 year old working women on February 2010 was 11.677.041 women. On February 2013, the number of 30-39 year old working women increased into 11.955.168 women.

However, there are good and bad assumptions toward the phenomenon of working mothers. Wicaksono (2011) said that working women, especially working mothers in Indonesia, have complex problems. They have to go to work with their busy schedules, but at the same time they feel sorry for leaving their preschool children at home. Working mothers have to go to work at least nine hours a day and possibly to work late. That condition makes working mothers have less time for their family, especially for their children. They have less time to spend and interact with their children compared to the non-working ones.

The correlation between the phenomenon of working mothers with children language acquisition is that it might affect children language acquisition, in particular the lexical or vocabulary acquisition. Mother as caregiver should assist and guide the children in their language acquisition but because they have to go to work, the time to spend with their children is limited. That condition makes the chance of

working mothers' children to listen to their mothers' speech is lower than the non-working mothers' children.

There have been many researchers on mother's role in children language acquisition. Vosoughi et al. (2010) in their research entitled *Effects of Caregiver Prosody on Child Language Acquisition* investigated the role of prosody in one child's lexical acquisition. They prove that the prosody of caregiver speech influences the lexical acquisition of the child. Then, Hurtado et al. (2008) in their study entitled *Does input influence uptake? Links between maternal talk, processing speed and vocabulary size in Spanish-learning children* analysed whether the quantity and quality of language input are associated with children speech processing efficiency, and asked whether caregiver talk not only guides the end-products of vocabulary learning, but also sharpens the processing skills used during real-time language comprehension. The results indicate that maternal talk is associated not only with children's vocabulary learning but also with development of efficiency in real-time lexical processing. Next, Dewi (2010) in her undergraduate thesis entitled *Perbedaan Kualitas Stimulasi Ibu Pada Anak Usia Prasekolah Ditinjau Dari Status Bekerja Dan Tidak Bekerja* analysed whether there is a difference in mother's quality of stimulation based on mother's working status without considering mother's education and socioeconomic class. The result of her research indicated that there is no difference in quality of mother's stimulation based on mother's working status.

Based on those researches above, the writer finds some research gaps. Vosoughi et al. (2011) specifically focus only on caregiver's speech prosody. They ignored the four features of caregiver's speech which can define its quality and quantity. Then, Hurtado et al (2008) focused on the role of input in lexical acquisition of Spanish-learning children. They focused on mothers' input and also its effect in their children lexical acquisition. After that, the previous undergraduate thesis which is written by Dewi (2010) looked on all eight aspects which define stimulation quality at home by Caldwell and Bradley, but she didn't observe the language stimulation by mothers specifically. In this case, the writer would like to focus on mothers' language stimulation to their children language acquisition. The writer assumes that the working mothers might have less quantity and quality of mother's speech in interaction with their children than the non-working ones. That is the reason why the writer chose the topic of working and non-working mothers' speech in interaction to their 2-3 year old children in Indonesia.

The writer is going to explain how the quantity and quality of working and non-working mothers' speech to their children is. The writer is also going to find which mother who produces more quantity and quality of speech to their 2-3 year old children. For the theoretical contribution, the writer expects this study can add reference for psycholinguistic research in children first language acquisition, especially the study of input in children lexical acquisition. Then, for the practical contribution, the writer hopes this study gives information for the readers, especially to mothers in Indonesia as caregiver about how to provide input and stimulation for their children language acquisition.

Method

Because this study aims to observe the quality and quantity of verbal interaction of mothers with their children, the writer will use qualitative approach. This approach can be described as observation of behaviour. One of the key elements of collecting data in this way is to observe participants' by engaging in their activities (Creswell 2008, p.37). The data of the study are taken from recorded natural conversation between working and non-working mothers and their two until three year old children in sixty minutes. There are four pairs of participants in this study which consist of a working mother with her son; a non-working mother with her son; a working mother with her daughter; and the last is a non-working mother with her daughter. Beside two of the mothers work outside home and the rest are stay at home, each mother is a married woman, in early until mid-30s, an Indonesian who speaks Bahasa Indonesia fluently, at least a S1 graduate, and comes from middle socioeconomic class. Then, for the children, there are two boys and two girls. The age range of the children is two until three year old. Each child is healthy; both parents are Indonesian; and born and grown up in Indonesia. All of the participants of this study live in Kediri.

For the techniques of data collection, the writer is collecting personal data of the research participants, recording and observing the conversation between mothers and children for 60 minutes in a month (done multiple times, at least two meetings per week), and transcribing the data orthographically. Then, for the data analysis, the writer is classifying the data of working and non-working mothers, counting the number of utterances and words in mother's speech to know its quantity, counting the number of word types and mothers' MLU to know its quality, and concluding the findings.

The Quantity and Quality of Working and Non-Working Mothers' Speech

The Quantity of Mothers' Speech

Utterances and words counts include every instance of an utterance and a word in mothers' speech (Hurtado et al., 2008). The example of an utterance in Bahasa Indonesia is *Jangan lupa berdoa sebelum makan*. That utterance contains five words. They are *jangan*, *lupa*, *berdoa*, *sebelum*, and *makan*. The number of utterances in all the mothers' speech in 60 minutes are listed and described below.

Participants	Number of utterances
Non-working mother A	558
Non-working mother B	593
Working mother A	986
Working mother B	721

Table 3.1 The Number of Utterances

The number of utterances and words in all the mothers' speech in 60 minutes are listed and described below.

Participants	Number of words
Non-working mother A	1690
Non-working mother B	1947
Working mother A	2862
Working mother B	2446

Table 3.2 The Number of Words

First, based on the number of utterances, the results show that in general the working mothers produced more utterances in their speech to their children than the non-working mothers. Second, based on the number of words, the results also show that in general the working mothers produced more words in their speech to their children than the non-working ones.

Based on the two findings above, we can conclude that the working mothers have more quantity of mothers' speech than the non-working ones. We can see that mothers who produced more utterances also produced more words. In contrast, mother who produced less utterances also produced less words. As the example, we can look at Table 3.1 that working mother A produced 986 utterances. That is the highest number of utterances of all the mothers'. In Table 3.2, she produced 2862 words. That is also the highest number of words among all the mothers. Then, for the lowest, in Table 3.1 the non-working mother A produced 558 utterances. In Table 3.2 the non-working A produced 1690 words. Both the number of utterances and the number of words in non-working mother A's speech is the lowest of all.

The Quality of Mothers' Speech

For the quality of mothers' speech measurements, the writer counted the number of word types in mothers' speech and mothers' MLU (Mean Length of Utterance). The number of word types provides an index of lexical diversity in mothers' speech. Then, the MLU is an index of grammatical complexity (Huttenlocher et al. & Hoff-Ginsberg in Hurtado et al., 2008).

The Number of Word Types in Mothers' Speech

The number of word types-count includes only the number of unique word root (Hurtado et al., 2008). Because the first language of the participants in this research is *Bahasa Indonesia*, the writer counted the number of word types based on the classification of word classes and types in *Bahasa Indonesia*. The writer follows Alwi et al. (2003) in the classification of word classes in *Bahasa Indonesia*. Then, there are also two types of words in *Bahasa Indonesia* based on word's complexity. They are called as *kata dasar* (root word) and *kata berimbuhan* (affixed word).

First, the writer will describe the results of the number of word types based on the classification of word classes in *Bahasa Indonesia*. Alwi et al. (2003) states there are five word classes in Indonesian language. They are *verba* (verb), *adjektiva* (adjective), *adverbia* (adverb), *nomina* (noun) and *kata tugas* (function words). The specific numbers of those word classes in mothers' speech are listed in the table below.

Participants	<i>Verba</i> (verb)	<i>Adjektiva</i> (adjective)	<i>Adverbia</i> (adverb)	<i>Nomina</i> (noun)	<i>Kata Tugas</i> (function word)
Non-working mother A	305	129	125	783	278
Non-working mother B	359	91	161	890	295
Working mother A	588	202	218	1287	513
Working mother B	430	110	208	1280	379

Table 3.3 The Number of Word Classes in Mothers' Speech

We can see that the working mother A produced the highest number of all the word classes among the mothers. Previously, the writer has found that working mother A produced more utterances and words. Therefore, the writer concludes that mother who spoke more to their children also used more different words to them. In this research it is shown by the working mother A's speech. Beside those findings which are based on the classification of word classes in *Bahasa Indonesia*, the writer also found that both working and non-working mothers as participants in this research produced *nomina* (noun) the most.

One of the characteristics of children's early words based on Gleason (1993) is that early words which are mostly produced are common nouns or general nominal. We can see that the findings of this research show that all the mothers mostly produced *nomina* (noun) in their speech. Both working and non-working mothers as participants in here seem to know that their children early words' characteristic is common nouns or general nominal, therefore they carefully choose appropriate words class in their speech which suit well with their children age.

Next, the writer will describe the finding of the number of word types in mothers' speech based on the other word types in *Bahasa Indonesia*. These word types in *Bahasa Indonesia* consist of *kata dasar* (root word) and *kata berimbuhan* (affixed word). They are classified based on their complexity. *Kata dasar* (root word) consists of only one free morpheme (Alwi et al., 2003). *Kata berimbuhan* (affixed word) consists of one free morpheme and bound morpheme(s) known as *imbuhan* (affix(es)). The overall number of *kata dasar* (root words) and *kata berimbuhan* (complex words) in all the mothers' speech are listed in the table below.

Participants	Dasar	Berimbuhan
Non-working mother A	1224	228
Non-working mother B	1475	230
Working mother A	2172	376
Working mother B	1844	350

Table 3.4 The Number of Word Types in Bahasa Indonesia in Mothers' Speech

The table above shows that all the mothers produced more *kata dasar* (root word) than *kata berimbuhan* (affixed word). Krashen states that the input received by a first language learner is simple and comprehensible at the beginning and is getting slightly more complicated. The interactionist-

perspective to first language acquisition also holds that one to one interaction gives the child access to language which is adjusted to his or her level of comprehension (Hulya, 2009 p.157). All the mothers carefully choose the content of their speech therefore it suits well with their children's current ability.

Mothers' MLU (Mean Length of Utterance)

The other quality of mothers' speech measurement is mothers' MLU (Mean Length of Utterance). It provides an index of grammatical complexity (Hurtado et al., 2008). Before counting the mothers' MLU, the writer needs to count both free and bound morphemes in mothers' utterances.

Participants	Free and Bound Morphemes
Non-working mother A	1761
Non-working mother B	1946
Working mother A	2964
Working mother B	2661

Table 3.5 The Number of Free and Bound Morphemes in Mothers' Utterances

After counting all the morphemes, the next step to count the mothers' MLU is by dividing the number of all the morphemes by the number of all utterances in mothers' speech.

Participants	MLU
Non-working mother A	3.15
Non-working mother B	3.28
Working mother A	3.00
Working Mother B	3.69

Table 3.6 Mothers' MLU (Mean Length of Utterance)

The results in Table 3.6 show that all the mothers' MLU in this research are in and above 3.00. All the mothers in this research have the same stage of grammatical complexity. However, although there is no much difference, the working mother B has the highest MLU. That indicates that actually working mother B produced the longest utterances of the other mothers.

From all the findings which are already described before, the writer found that the working mother A produced most utterances and most words, used most different words, and had higher MLU than all the non-working mothers. Therefore, the writer concludes that mother who produced more utterances also produced more words. Then, because she spoke more, she used more different words and longer utterances. In other words, the working mothers who have more quantity of speech to their children also have more quality of speech.

There are some factors which explained the reason of working mothers in this research have more quantity and quality of speech than the non-working ones. First, because the working mothers feel guilty to leave her children at home, they pay back their absence by giving more quality time when they are together with their children. The quality of time spent can sometimes be higher with working mothers since they feel the need to compensate for the missed hours during the day (Adhikari, 2012). Second, although they have less time to interact with their children compared to the non-working mothers, but their speech have more varieties. The working mothers have broad minded and get to interact with various kinds of people outside home. Intellectual stimulation, problem solving, and handling challenges increase feelings of self-esteem and self-confidence of working mothers (Adhikari, 2012). Working mothers also have chance to know and feel the latest development outside home. Those advantages lead the working mothers' speech to their 2-3 year old children is richer than the non-working ones.

Conclusion

This research aims at describing and explaining the quantity and quality of working and non-working mothers' speech to their 2-3 year old children. The writer chooses that topic because nowadays mothers as women have role changing in the society. Some mothers choose to go to work than stay at home. However, some of the working mothers' still have preschool children who need their mother as the main

caregivers at home. It is obvious that working mothers do not have much time to spend and interact with their children compared to the non-working ones. Their absence can be a problem since their children need their mother to teach and guide them. Mother's speech to children is important since it is the verbal input in children vocabulary or lexical acquisition. That phenomenon leads the writer to assume that working mothers might have less quantity and quality of speech than the non-working ones.

In this research the quantity and quality of mothers' speech are assessed by counting the number of utterances, number of words, number of word types, and mothers' MLU. Based on those four measurements, surprisingly the findings show that the working mothers have more quantity and quality of speech to their 2-3 year old children than the non-working ones. The results prove that the writer's assumption before is wrong.

There are some factors which lead the working mothers to have more quantity and quality of speech than the non-working ones. First, because the working mothers feel guilty to leave her children at home, they pay back their absence by giving more quality time when they are together with their children. Second, although they have less time to interact with their children compared to the non-working mothers, but their speech have more varieties of vocabularies because they have broad mind and get to interact with various kinds of people outside home. Those advantages lead the working mothers' have richer speech to their children than the non-working ones.

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