

Baby Talk in Malayalam

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Abstract

Baby talk is a specialized speech style used by the adults to children. It is a special form of speech and it has particular roles in language acquisition, cultural transmission and language development. This study attempts to examine the phonological, lexical and syntactic features of Malayalam baby Talk.

Introduction

How children so quickly and magically acquire the language and it was a interested subject for thousands of years. Psammeticus, an Egyptian Pharaoh during the 7th century BC believed that language was in-born and the children isolated from birth from any linguistic influence would develop the language they had been born with. Akbar, the Mughal emperor of India, he desired to learn whether language was innate or acquired through exposure to the speech of adults. He believed that language was learned by listening to each other and a child could not develop language alone. So, he conducted an experiment. He ordered a house built for two infants and stationed a mute nurse to care for them. The children do not acquire speech. It seemed to prove Akbar's hypothesis that language is acquired from the environment. In this context Baby Talk has a very important role in language acquisition.

Language acquisition is typical human capacity. It takes place automatically. Language is not genetically transmitted, and it is acquired from the environment. A child acquires his language by the interaction of parents and surroundings. Baby Talk has been defined by various scholars. Snow & Ferguson defines Baby Talk "it is a special language and it refers to a set of speech modifications commonly found in the language used by the adults to address young children". Bhat referred Baby Talk "as the style of speech used by the adults as an analogue of child speech that serves as the model". Charles Ferguson defined Baby Talk "any special form of language which is regarded by speech community as being primarily appropriate for talking to young children. According to Roman Jakobson Baby Talk as "a kind of pidgin a typical mixed language, where the addressers try to adjust themselves to the verbal habits of their addressees and to establish a common code suitable for both interlocutors in a child- adult dialogue. From these definitions we can understand that baby Talk is simplified speech style and it is a speech register that has been more extensively used by mothers. This simplified register helps the child to acquire and familiarize the language. *Motherese, parentese, child-directed speech*, etc. are the synonyms terms used to refer the concept.

