

# **Child Language and Baby Talk in Amharic**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The child language lexicon in Amharic is not properly recorded. This created a research gap in the study of the phonological and morphological features of child language in Amharic. This study describes phonological, morphological and semantic features of the child language lexicon in Amharic. Methodologically, the research is based on the Amharic child language lexicon collected from parents and their toddlers whose ages are between 2 and 5 years. Consequently, 130 items were collected and their phonological and morphological features were analyzed. In addition to serving as a benchmark for further studies in the area, this research also paves the way for similar studies in other Ethiopian languages.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### *1.1 Background of the Study and Statement of the Problem*

Often, adults use a specific form of language when they speak to toddlers who are in the process of acquiring a language as their mother tongue. This way of speaking, known as Baby Talk or Child Language, is commonly observed when adults are communicating with small children on daily activities. Ferguson (1964:105) defines Baby Talk as “any special form of a language which is regarded by a speech community as being primarily appropriate for talking to young children and which is generally regarded as not the normal adult use of language.”

Children will learn to speak sooner if adults talk to them in Baby Talk, instead of the language used with other adults. Thus, Baby Talk is not just a way to speak to children but it is also a mechanism of helping them learning to acquire a language. As far as language acquisitions are concerned, Baby Talk is the natural way by which children start learning their very first words. In line with this, Bloomfield (1978:125) remarks the following:

“Babies are fascinating people. They are born with the ability to soak up knowledge like a sponge. They have an innate ability to watch, listen, and imitate the people around them. Yet, if you watch the preference of a

baby in the crib, they will pay more attention to the person speaking in baby talk than the person speaking in a normal voice.”

Whyatt (1994: 128) shows that Baby Talk is considered by adults as useful in communication with toddlers. It is characterized by short utterances with low semantic complexity, repetition of utterances and imitation. According to Ferguson (1964:103), it is assumed that Baby Talk is a

“... relatively stable, conventionalized part of a language, transmitted by ‘natural’ means of language transmission much like the rest of the language; it is, in general, not a universal, instinctive creation of children everywhere, or an ephemeral form of speech arising out of adults’ imitation of child speech.”

Baby Talk is the basic foundations of adult-infant communication. It has some barriers emanating from a lack of understanding in day-to-day communication at schools, at home and with day cares. Because of such natural barriers, toddlers cannot communicate using full-fledged language with adults in general; neither can parents use fully structured Baby Talk.

Despite its significance for language acquisition, adult-infant communication and language development, Baby Talk is one of the least researched areas in language. There is usually no detailed description of Baby Talk in most well researched languages including Amharic. Therefore, this research is primarily

designed to show the main features of Baby Talk in Amharic through describing and analyzing the lexicon that is commonly used in adult-infant interaction.

### *1.2 Objectives of the Study*

The main objective of the research is to describe Baby Talk and early child language in Amharic. More specifically, the research intends to:

- Record and transcribe the lexicon that is commonly used by Amharic-speaking toddlers,
- Analyze the general phonological and morphological features of this lexicon.

### *1.3 Significance of the Study*

Child language and baby talk are not well-researched areas in Amharic and other Ethiopian languages. As being the first of its type, the research significantly enhances the lexicographic and grammatical description of Amharic by providing detailed information on the early language forms in Amharic. The following are the significant points of the research:

- To provide the first description of Amharic child language lexicon
- To identify the lexical, phonological and morphological differences between adult speech and child language which might be helpful for pedagogical purposes

- To provide a database for further research.

#### *1.4 Limitations of the Study*

The research is conducted on Baby Talk in Amharic. The information on Baby Talk was gathered from selected kindergartens, child-care centers, schools and households in Addis Ababa. It focused on a cohort of 50 children aged between 2 to 5 years. Further, the study is primarily concerned with the lexicon of Amharic Baby Talk but does not include cognitive aspect of first language acquisition and development.

#### *1.5 Organization of the Study*

This thesis is organized in four chapters. Chapter one consists of the introductory part that contains the background of the study and the statement of the problem, the objective, significance, limitation and organization of the study. The second chapter contains the literature review, which reviews related works and previous studies. Chapter three deals with the methodology and describes the research methods that contain the research approach, information on the sample, method of collecting, analyzing, and presenting the data. Chapter four comprises the data analysis. The last chapter states the conclusions and findings drawn from the study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### *2.1 Definition of Baby Talk*

People of all levels interact with each other regardless of their mental maturity or age by using a language. Crystal (2008:265 f.) broadly defines language as concrete act of speaking, writing or signing in a given situation. Focusing on speaking, Boer (2005:285) mentions, “Speech is learned and used by complex brains ... in the setting of a complex population of language users.” Accordingly, Todd (1987) describes language as a communication system that is unique to humans. Communication, however, is not the sole attribute of human beings. Animals also communicate. But unlike animals’ vocal communication, human beings communicate by using linguistic systems, i.e., languages, which are unique due to their nature of flexibility, complexity, precision, and productivity (Todd, 1987:4).

Human beings acquire language starting from their early age. In every speech community, adults talk to toddlers who are able to acquire their mother tongue just through this interaction. Initially, the adults will use a unique register for the interaction, which is called variously in the literature, e.g., ‘input language’,

‘child-directed speech (CDS)’, ‘baby talk’, ‘motherese’ or ‘mother’s speech’<sup>1</sup> (Whyatt, 1994:126). In this thesis, the term Baby Talk is used to refer to the primary language form and style used for communication between toddlers and their parents or guardians, or even between the toddlers themselves.

Any speech community uses culturally distinct ways to communicate with infants and young children (Solomon, 1986:122). Being aware of the importance of culture, Ferguson (1964:103) describes Baby Talk as any special form of language which is regarded by the speech community appropriate for talking to young children. He stated that adults regard the form of language as not normal. The speech community, therefore, recognizes Baby Talk as inaccurate use of adult language, on the one hand, but also as appropriate commonly known speech style when used for communication with toddlers on the other.

The very first sounds produced by newborn children or their adult interlocutors are recognized as words, i.e., as sound-meaning units, in Baby Talk that later develops into the full-fledged lexicon of a language (Radford 2009a:98). The lexicon is the total inventory of free or bound morphemes in a language. The knowledge of this inventory may differ between speakers and change over time.

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<sup>1</sup> The terms ‘motherese’ and ‘mother’s speech’ may indicate the closeness of mothers to their babies or the condition by which children are usually raised by their mothers but not by their fathers.

The type of sound-meaning units used in communication with infants can be called the Baby Talk lexicon (Crystal 2008:278).

## *2.2 Common Features of Baby Talk*

Baby Talk is not a full-fledged language; consequently, adults use additional techniques for communicating with infants. Gestures, facial expression, gaze, back channel response, pointing, etc. are used in interactions long before children start speaking (Goodwin 2000).

Most of the time adults speak to young children in a specific way to keep their attention. In this regard, Clark (2009:37) explains:

“They use a vocative (the child’s name) or an endearment (*sweetheart!*); they use a deictic term as a summons (*Here! Look! See!*); and they mark their utterances with higher than normal pitch, for example, to distinguish it from utterances that might be designed to other addresses.”

Likewise, selecting suitable words and presenting them in a short utterance are frequently used so that the infant can identify them in the speech stream. According to Ferguson (1977:74), the common ways that adults use in Baby Talk include the following:

“When using baby talk, caregivers modify their speech by increasing its pitch, exaggerating its positive effect, slowing down its tempo, and speaking in short, syntactically simple sentences. Through such

modifications and an extensive use of repetition specialized lexicon and diminutive and kinship terms, adult speech is phonologically, lexically and grammatically transformed into baby talk.”

Already Ferguson (1996:81) mentions the following general features of the Baby Talk register:

“These features include prosody (high pitch, exaggerated, intonation contours, and slower rate), lexicon (kin terms and body parts, infant games), phonology (cluster reduction, reduplication, and special sounds), syntax (shorter sentences, telegraphic style, repetition, and parataxis) and discourse (questions, pronoun shifts).”

With regard to these features of the Baby Talk lexicon, Haynes and Cooper (1986) report that most of them were found in 27 out of 34 languages they studied. Eight of the features were found to be the most common ones, namely, high pitch, exaggerated intonation contours, shorter sentences, repetition, special terms for kin and body parts, reduplication, and pronoun shift.

In general, simplification, clarification, self-repetition, paraphrasing, special phonological and morphological modifications (as compared to the adult speech of the language), simple syntactic constructions, and sentences of reduced length are common characteristics of Baby Talk.

### 2.2.1 Phonological Features of Baby Talk

Infants pronounce sounds and words differently from adults, i.e., the phonological inventory of Baby Talk differs in certain features from the phonological inventory of adults. In English, for example, toddlers often use *tore* or *sore* for *store*, or *gig* instead of *pig* (Gleason & Nan 2009:58).

Toddlers are naturally incapable of producing certain sounds or sound combinations of the adult language. As a result, according to Bhat (1967:33), toddlers simplify the phonology of adult speech to make up the limitations they have in developing articulatory and mental systems. Furthermore, Bhat (1967) mentions that most of the phonological simplifications include consonant cluster simplification, substitution, assimilation, and omission.

Toddlers simplify consonant clusters, i.e., sequences of two or more consonants that appear in adult language. Such simplification of consonant clusters is one of the features Ferguson (1964) found out in the study he conducted on six languages. Ferguson (1964) indicates that consonant clusters simplification of the toddlers is done through dropping consonants. When clusters of three consonants appear, the toddlers simplify the cluster by retaining only the middle consonant, or omitting either the initial or the final consonants, or changing one of the consonants and dropping the other two. Clark (2009) also states that children simplify consonant clusters, usually retaining only the stop if there is

one. Thus, while uttering English words that start with the consonant cluster *skw*, toddlers often drop both the glide *w* and the initial *s* keeping only the velar stop *k* (Clark 2009:94).

Similarly, Gleason and Nan (2009:79) state that toddlers avoid consonant clusters by leaving out one of the sounds. Thus, children utter [tour] or [sour] for the English nouns 'store', or [ku:l] or [su:l] for the noun 'school'. The toddlers who omit the stops *t* and *k* in the clusters *st* and *sk* may retain the plosive *t* in words with the cluster *st* but delete the fricative *s* instead. Most commonly, however, toddlers dissolve word-initial clusters starting with the fricative *s* by omitting the fricative, as in English 'stop', 'small' or 'slide', which are pronounced in Baby Talk as [top], [mo] or [laid], respectively.

When a stop is combined with a liquid in a consonant cluster in English, the liquid is usually omitted in Baby Talk, as in [gok] for 'clock', [mɪk] for 'milk', or [brɪŋ] for 'bring'. In addition, if a stop is combined with a nasal, the stop is retained but the nasal omitted, as in [bʌp] for 'bump' or [tɛt] for 'tent'. When in English a fricative and a glide (i.e., *j*, *w*, *r*) form a cluster usually only the fricative is uttered in Baby Talk, as in [fom] for 'from' and [fu:] for 'few' (cf. Clark 2009:95).

Omission also occurs in other parts of a word in English, not only in clusters. In this regard, toddlers tend to omit the final consonant or even the final syllable in

early words if it is unstressed, as in [ba] for ‘ball’, [ti] for ‘kick’, or [bu] for ‘boot’ (Clark 2009:106 ff.). Related to this, Gleason and Nan (2009) suggest that the length of a word and its stress pattern could be the possible cause of phonological modification. Thus, young children may omit the initial syllable of multisyllabic words when it is unstressed, as in English [mato] for ‘tomato’, [zɛrt] for ‘dessert’, or [pɒsəd] for ‘supposed’. Unstressed syllables in medial position may also be omitted as can be seen in English words like [tɛfɒn] for ‘telephone’ or [ɛfənt] for ‘elephant’. Generally, unstressed syllables commonly tend to be omitted in Baby Talk (Gleason & Nan 2009:80).

Substitution is another technique for the simplification of consonant clusters in Baby Talk. Here, the toddlers substitute consonant combinations with a single consonant that is not part of the actual cluster. Thus, the English word ‘spill’ is often pronounced as *fill* in Baby Talk, i.e., the consonant cluster *sp* is substituted by the fricative *f*, not *s*. This *f* appears to be an attempt to match the sound of the whole cluster with a single consonant, i.e., *f* combines the fricative character of *s* and the labial character of *p* (Gleason & Nan 2009:80). Substitution is not restricted to consonant clusters. It also occurs with non-segmental features of single consonants. Clark (2009:106) observes that English-learning toddlers have a preference to voice stops in word-initial position but to devoice them word-finally. Thus, the English word ‘pie’ is often pronounced [baj] in Baby Talk with initial voiced *b* instead of unvoiced *p*. Toddlers tend to compensate for their

inability to voice stops in word-final positions by adding a nasal consonant preceding or following the stop at the same place of articulation, as in [dadn] for ‘dad’, [pɪŋk] for ‘pig’ or [bent] for ‘bed’. On the other hand, toddlers also frequently substitute fricatives in adult speech by stops in Baby Talk. Thus, they may utter [tewiʃ] for ‘sandwich’ (with initial *t* substituted for *s*). Similar examples include [najb] for ‘knife’ (with final *b* for *f*), [bʌd] for ‘bus’ (with *d* for *s*), or [dun] for ‘soon’ (also with *d* for *s*).

Furthermore, Ferguson (1964:105) observes the substitution of *r* in adult speech by *l*, *j*, *w* or the apical stops *t*, *d* in Baby Talk. Besides, the fricative *s* in adult speech is substituted by the affricate *tʃ* in Baby Talk, as in Spanish *becho* for *beso*, meaning ‘shoe’ in English. These Baby Talk substitutions for *r* and *s* in adult speech are not restricted to individual languages but seem to be a cross-linguistic phenomenon (Ferguson 1964:105).

Clark (2009:106) also considers fronting, i.e., the change in place of articulation of a consonant from the back to the front of the mouth, and gliding, i.e., a change in the manner of articulation from liquid *r*, *l* to glide *w*, *j*, as a kind of substitution. Accordingly, fronting occurs when toddlers produce consonants further forward in the mouth, as in [ti] for ‘key’, or [fit] for ‘thick’. Gliding occurs, for instance, in [webit] for ‘rabbit’ (Clark 2009:106).

Assimilation, as another feature of Baby Talk phonology, is defined by Clark (2009:106) as the effect of sounds on those preceding or following them within a word or across word boundaries. Clark (2009) mentions three types of assimilation in Baby Talk. First, assimilation of vowels and consonants occurs through reduplication of entire syllables, as in English [ba.ba] for 'bottle', [ki.ki] for 'kitchen', or [da.da] for 'daddy'. Second, vowel harmony occurs when toddlers use the same vowel across the syllables of a word, as in English [lidi] for 'little'. Consonant harmony may also occur when the toddlers use the same consonant in the onset of all syllables in a word whereby the vowel differs across the syllables, as in [babi] for 'blanket'. Third, assimilation is also represented in Baby Talk when nasality is added to non-nasal consonants, as in English [nam] for 'lamb', where the initial *l* is produced as *n* in accordance with the word-final *m* (Clark 2009:106).

Drachman (1975:211) showed that in different linguistic communities children tend to replace velar stops by alveolar ones. Accordingly, an English-speaking child who says [tat] for 'cat' also says [do] for 'go'. Further, children tend to replace fricatives in adult words by a stop in Baby Talk, as in English [ti] for 'sea' or [tei] for 'say'. Drachman (1975:213) summarized these two phonological processes under the term "stopping".

Fronting is one of the most common phonological features in child language. Francescato (1968:151) shows that velar and palatal consonants tend to be replaced by alveolar consonants. Velar fronting is observed, for example, when the phonemes /k/ and /g/ are substituted for sounds made at the alveolars, as in [tookie] for 'cookie' or [doat] for 'goat' in English. Francescato (1968:158) identified three more phonological features of substitution in Baby Talk: gliding, voicing and devoicing. The English words 'lap', 'leg' and 'ready', for instance, are frequently pronounced by children as [jap], [jek], or [wedi], respectively. This substitution of the liquid consonants *l* or *r* in adult speech by *w* or *j* in Baby Talk is called gliding. Furthermore, consonants tend to be voiced in Baby Talk when they precede a vowel, but are devoiced at the end of a syllable, as in English, [be:b.] for 'paper' or [bik] for 'pig'.

Regarding consonant harmony, Drachman (1975:93) observed that consonants tend to assimilate to each other in certain predictable ways in C1VC2 syllables. The three patterns of consonant harmony are: (i) velar assimilation (i.e., apical consonants tend to assimilate to a neighboring velar consonant, like [gigu] for 'duck'); (ii) labial assimilation (i.e., apical consonants tend to assimilate to a neighboring labial consonant, like [bejp] for 'tape'; and (iii) denasalization (i.e., a nasal consonant denasalizes in the neighborhood of a non-nasal consonant.

In languages with ejective consonants, de-ejectivisation is observed in Baby Talk. Considering the lexicon of Amharic-speaking children who are younger than four years, Abebayehu (2008:43) stated that it is quite common to hear pulmonic consonants replacing their ejective counterparts, as in Amharic [pappas] for adult speech *p'app'as* 'bishop'.

### 2.2.2 Morphological Features of Baby Talk

Toddlers begin to acquire and expand grammatical rules at a very early age. In toddlers' morphological and syntactic development similar patterns and processes can be observed. These patterns and processes are constant across different linguistic and cultural groups (King 2010:211 ff.).

Starting from the age of six months, toddlers produce words such as [mama] or [dada] to call their parents. The multisyllabic utterances at this age are categorized as reduplicated babbles (i.e., a string of identical syllables, like [ba.ba.ba]) or variegated babbles (i.e., syllable strings with varying consonants and vowels, like [ba.gi.da.bu]). Toddlers at this age also acquire forms for a small number of general-purpose verbs, like 'come', 'go', and 'give', and a few property concepts, like 'nice', 'big', and 'good' (Gleason & Nan 2009:70; Radford 2009a:186 f.).

Besides the limited number of items in the Baby Talk lexicon, early language of toddlers could be regarded as "ungrammatical" in adult sense. According to

Radford (2009a), early language learning is predominated by rote, that is, through hearing. As a result, based on the word patterns they hear, toddlers tend to treat different patterns in the same way. For example, they may form a rule for themselves that past tensed verb in English end in *-ed* and then overgeneralize that rule to irregular English verbs, such as 'go' and 'bring'. So they often go through a long stage of saying *goed* and *bringed* before eventually learning the actual irregular forms *went* and *brought* (Radford 2009a:186 f.). In addition, Rubino (2003:31) states that once the toddlers hear that the plural form of the regular English noun *dog* is *dogs*, they overgeneralize to irregular nouns as well. Overgeneralization of the plural formation rule in English also occurs when toddlers start treating singular nouns that end with the fricative *s* as plural nouns, i.e., toddlers may deduce that nouns like *house* or *purse* are in plural (Clark 2009:8 f.).

Fashold (2010:216) observes that English-learning toddlers pass through three predictable stages in acquiring a language among which the feature of overgeneralization commonly occurs in the second stage. First, toddlers use the correct past and present tenses of verbs (e.g. *go* and *went*). However, they do not relate the two forms as belonging to the same verb. They rather treat the two tenses as separate entities in their lexicon. Then, in the second phase, they construct a rule for forming the past tense and begin to overgeneralize by applying it to irregular verbs, like 'go' becoming *goed* in the past tense instead of

went. Finally, they move to the last stage where they learn the exceptions to the past-tense rule and acquire, thus, the ability to apply this rule selectively.

### *2.3 Function of Baby Talk*

Baby Talk is the basic foundation of early language acquisition and development. The toddlers spend most of their early times with their mothers or caregivers learning the very first words (Clark 2009:39). As days pass, the toddlers learn more words that they use to interact with other people they meet when they go to day-care centers, kindergartens or primary schools. Thus, Baby Talk serves as the only means of linguistic communication for toddlers with their environment. Therefore, it is the main tool used in adult-infant communication in every society. In addition, it also plays a prominent role in socializing the infant and transferring cultural knowledge and values. Greiser and Kuhl (1988:410) explain this as follows:

“First, ... baby talk prosody parses speech in a way that makes syntactic boundaries more noticeable; second ... the dramatic explanations in pitch contours make baby talk acoustically salient and perceptually distinctive, attracting the infants attention to the turn-taking with the care givers. Third, baby talk’s high prosody signals positive effect, which encourages the infant to recognize and respond to the care givers in the culturally appropriate way.”

Accordingly, through the above three experiences, infants start to understand their surrounding, learn the speech community's culture and develop their linguistic skills.

### 2.3.1 Language Acquisition and Development through Baby Talk

Language acquisition occurs with all children with normal brain and functional speech organs, regardless of race, culture or general intelligence. In other words, the capacity to acquire language is a capacity of the human species as a whole (Akmajian et al. 2001:477). Radford (2009b:15 f.) claims that the course of language acquisition is determined by an innate Language Faculty, known popularly as the Innateness Hypothesis. He notes that infants acquiring a language will observe people around them using language. The set of expressions in the language that they hear (and the contexts in which they are used) constitutes the infants' linguistic experiences of that language. This experience serves as input to the infant's Language Faculty, which incorporates a set of principles of Universal Grammar that enable infants to use their experience to devise a grammar of the language they are acquiring. Thus, the input to the Language Faculty is the infant's experience while the output of the Language Faculty is a grammar of the language being acquired (Radford 2009b:15 f.).

Word learning is very crucial in the processes of language acquisition. According to Tomasello (2003:43), word learning can be done by various techniques, like pointing and naming games. At this time, the infants associate the word they currently hear with the thing they are seeing. Infants experience basically all words in the ongoing flow of social interaction and discourse of adults. Second, infants must learn most words from complex interactive situations in which determining the adult's intended referent for some novel word is not straightforward. Therefore, he assumes a social-pragmatic theory of word learning, in which the infants' ability to read the intentions and communicative intentions of other persons is central.

In social interactions, adults have to use child language, which differs from adult-directed speech. Thus, speaking in a way that engages the infant and encourages back and forth communication may be useful in language development and acquisition. According to Seaton (2007:53), communicating with infants is important to stay in tune with their needs and desires as well as to teach them how to interpret and respond to social cues encoded in everyday language. As Seaton (2007) discusses, research in this area based on brain imaging technology has found that infants listening to Baby Talk display higher neural activity than they do while listening to adult-directed speech. Improved word recognition and word segmentation have been noted in groups of infants

who are exposed to new words and phrases using Baby Talk as compared to infants exposed to adult-directed speech.

Akmajian et al. (2001:476) explain language acquisition by two theories: behaviorism and the alternative approach. Behaviorism generally states that behavior of an organism can be understood by observing its interaction with the environment. For language acquisition, behaviorism argues that children are endowed with a general learning ability at birth but not with any specific language skill. The specific language skill is acquired through imitation. Unlike behaviorism, adherents of the alternative approach argue that the environment alone is not sufficient enough for an infant to acquire language. They argue that there should be a language acquisition device, an in-born system or universal grammar through which the infants are enabled to learn any language with restricted input. For this, it is argued that infants should be exposed to the environment that serves as linguistic data input in the language acquisition process.

Moreover, Bhat (1967:65) emphasizes that Baby Talk is the 'stepping stone' by which children start to learn their first language. Some researchers suggest that parents, mainly mothers, and caregivers play a significant role in infants' primary language development. For instance, Laakso, Helasvuo and Savinainen-Makkonen (2010:219) describe Baby Talk:

"... as the caregivers respond to the children's proto-word expressions with names and by conducting some actions, during the course of these interactive proto-word sequences the children start to learn the linguistic signs/names of different referents. Thus, through this sequential work the child can acquire the meanings (and forms) of the shared signs of language."

In the acquisition process of any language, there are abstract units that range from the phonetic to the pragmatic level. According to Skehon (1998:34), infants make their first meaningful utterances by pointing or showing gestures accompanied by vocalization at the age around one year. The gesture-vocalization schema is later replaced by recognizable conventional words through a stage of Baby Talk.

According to Bhat (1967:33), infants in an early stage may produce a sound or sound combination appropriately at one time but later appear to be unable to produce it again. According to Clark (2009:100), English-learning infants start pronouncing the adult word 'dog' or its diminutive 'doggy' as [do], but then reduplicate the consonant *d*, as in [dodi]. Once they are able to produce the sound *g*, they start pronouncing 'doggy' as [gogi]. Only after this stage, they master the adult sequence *doggy*. The shift from [dodi] to [gogi] occurs because infants can appropriately produce a single CV syllable and reduplicate it, but it is hard for them to produce a CVCV sequence with two different consonants in succession.

In general, linguists such as Clark (2009) or Akmajian et al. (2001) are of the opinion that infants' language acquisition and development follow three stages. The first stage is the babbling stage that begins at the infant's age of around five to six months. At this stage, the infant utters sounds and sound sequences (syllables such as *ba*, *ma*, *ga*) that are meaningless but recognizable as being more language-like than earlier infantile cries. All children go through a babbling stage, regardless of language and culture. The similarity of sounds the children produce at this stage suggests that humans are biologically predisposed to go through this phase (cf. Clark 2009:390; Akmajian et al. 2001:483).

The second stage is the one-word stage, which starts in the late part of the first year of life or the early part of the second year. At this stage, children start to use recognizable words of their native languages. The words cited in Akmajian et al. (2001:481) for English include the names of familiar people, animals, and objects in the infant's environment (like *mama*, *dada*, *kitty*, *doggie*, *ball*, *bottle*, and *cup*) and words indicating certain actions and demands. Viewed from the perspective of adult grammar, the words that occur at this stage include simple nouns and verbs. Very few or no function words, like prepositions, articles, auxiliary verbs, interrogative words, are acquired at this stage (Brown 1973:220).

The last stage is the multiword stage, which starts when the children reach the age of 20 to 27 months. As Akmajian et al. (2001:484 f.) state, children begin to express a variety of grammatical and conceptual relations at this stage. They begin to use word order to indicate certain relations – for example possessor followed by possessed or subject followed by predicate.

More importantly, children begin to reflect the distinction between sentence types, such as negative sentences, imperatives and questions at this stage. As children enter the later multiword stages, additional wh-words, such as *why*, *who*, begin to enter their language. They also begin using yes/no questions.

In addition to its role in language acquisition and development, Baby Talk contributes to the introduction of new vocabulary. Some Baby Talk words even enter the adult language. Regarding this transformation, Ferguson (1964:111) mentions that Baby Talk items often diffuse within an area and become part of the adult vocabulary. A good example is the Baby Talk word [kix] meaning ‘dirty, don’t touch’ in Indo- European. This word, with slightly different forms depending on the phonological systems of the respective languages, occurs in almost every language of the Middle East.

Coulmas & Eckert (1998:110) mention the following with regard to Baby Talk words in adult speech:

“Baby talk is also not child bound. It serves not only as a register to use when speaking with small children, but features of baby talk are used among speakers of all ages, including mature adults. In this sense, certain aspects of child identity and social relations endure in the linguistic strategies of older people, making children’s linguistic resources a community-wide resource.”

Hence, some speech communities use Baby Talk words in infant- and also in adult-directed communication. When these words are widely applied, they become part of the adult-speech vocabulary. The English Baby Talk words ‘mummy’ and ‘daddy’ are today part of the English adult vocabulary and have long been included in dictionaries.

### 2.3.2 Socialization through Baby Talk

Verbal interactions between infants and caregivers promote not only the development of language skills for communication but are also integral part of the infants’ socialization process. Through interaction, Baby Talk features for structuring attention or calling for participation may be used for other communicational intentions, like expression of affection or intimacy in the context of nurturing social interaction. In this way, Baby Talk helps the infant develop cultural knowledge and beliefs (cf. Brown 1973:51).

In this regard, the caregiver provides the infant both the linguistic and cultural inputs it needs for its further development, e.g., a set of procedures for interpreting situations, for indicating the appropriate behavior expected of the

child and others. Ochs (1982:80 ff.) also observes that caregivers act on certain assumptions concerning the capacities of infants and young children. The knowledge of these assumptions enables the understanding of the process of socialization through language.

The form of Baby Talk across different speech communities illuminates a wide diversity of values and ideologies in the use of language and attitudes towards it. Therefore, scholars like Haynes and Cooper (1986) argue that the socialization through Baby Talk can be affected by the social nature in which the infant grows up. Haynes and Cooper (1986) found out that the use of Baby Talk across communities, cultures, and contexts is characterized by a complex interaction of beliefs, practices, and ideologies. In a society that does not promote adult-infant interaction, the infants' interactive potential will be relatively lower than in societies that promote interaction.

In support of the above, Ochs (1982:130) explains that interaction promotes easy socialization. He states that the more caregivers take part in the infants' socialization, the better they are socialized.

#### *2.4 Survey of Previous Research on Baby Talk in the African Context*

Baby Talk is not a well-researched area in most African languages. In my search for literature, I found only one work specifically dealing with this topic, namely,

Takada (2011), who studied preverbal caregiver-child interaction among the Gui and Gana, two neighboring groups of the San people in central Botswana. For his study, Takada visited 346 huts of the San people and video-recorded a total of 35 hours interaction between caregivers and children.

The objective of his study was to establish a theoretical perspective on the development of caregiver-child interactions by focusing on language socialization prior to speech development, status of participants in caregiver-child interaction, and the multiple contexts of care giving. His two major findings are the following: First, baby talk features like high pitch, intonation and exaggeration develop infants' inclination concerning what to do and what not to do in interaction by providing them with foundations to develop a sense of responsibility. Second, caregivers involve children in the participation framework of socially and culturally organized practices long before children become able to understand others' intentions and viewpoints. Based on his findings, Takada (2011:77) emphasizes that caregiver-infant interaction is an important process of emergent biological and cultural engagement.

Apart from Takada (2011), other studies on the use or linguistic peculiarities of Baby Talk in African language including Ethiopian languages and here in particular Amharic were not found. To this regard, this study is intended to enhance the knowledge about linguistic features of Baby Talk in Amharic.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

A descriptive research design that mixes quantitative and qualitative research methods was applied for the investigation of Baby Talk in Amharic. The general research design is qualitative and descriptive. The primary data were collected using interview, questionnaire and observation.

The researcher conducted informal interviews with 50 children between 2–5 years of age in day-care centers and their parents and caregivers. The informal interview was selected as a data-gathering tool due to its heuristic power that gives the infant respondents the opportunity to provide detailed information for their particular cases.

The second data-gathering tool was a questionnaire that elicits selected information on the structure and use of Baby Talk (see Appendix). The questionnaire was administered by parents whose children are between 2–5 years as well as their caregivers. The questionnaire data was specifically used to gather data that represent common Baby Talk expressions.

A significant number of lexicon items were collected through observation. In addition, observation of verbal interaction between young children and adults was used to crosscheck the data from the interview and questionnaire.

Observation was conducted in daycare centers and kindergartens. Here the children's interaction with their teachers and caregivers in classrooms, and their interaction with each other in the playgrounds were observed. Moreover, the children's interaction with their parents while they are brought to or taken from school was also observed.

Following the interview, questionnaires and observation, the researcher recorded the Baby Talk lexicon by audio recorder in interaction with the children, which enabled him to provide a phonetic transcription of the utterances using IPA.

Data gathering was accomplished in two phases. The validity of the tools was checked by distributing sample questionnaires, conducting interviews and observation in one kindergarten and three families. As a result, the researcher identified the limitations of the tools and made the necessary corrections including the following:

1. Most respondents and interviewees focused on syntax and the communication gap between infants and adults rather than on listing the children's lexicon. As a result, the questionnaire was re-designed in order to help respondents specifically list the Baby Talk lexicon.
2. Some respondents did not provide the words in the way their children pronounce them but list them as they are pronounced by adults. Therefore, the data collection was extended to recording adult-infant interactions to gather the actual child pronunciation of the words.

3. Kindergartens were first selected as main places to collect the Baby Talk lexicon. However, during the pilot study the researcher observed that the children selected have already started speaking adult Amharic language. Consequently, the sampling area was narrowed to daycare centers with children of 2 to 5 years of age.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION**

The main study was conducted with children from Amharic-speaking families in Addis Ababa. In order to enhance the validity of the data, the researcher selected 55 sample families whose children are in the age group of 2–5 years from three day-care centers and two kindergartens in Addis Ababa, Gulele, Kirkos and Lideta sub-cities. Accordingly, a total of 55 questionnaires were distributed among families from these areas but only 47 respondents have returned it.

In addition, informal interviews were conducted with some of the children in day-care centers and kindergartens. The interview was administered on conditions when the children were playing in groups as well as when they were attending their class. Because most of the children in day care centers could not actively participate in formal interviews, the researcher used a question and answer method while they were playing. The following table provides the details regarding the research sites:

*Table 1: Research sites*

No.	NAME OF INSTITUTION	PLACE	TOTAL NO. OF CHILDREN	NO. OF CHILDREN INTERVIEWED
1	Adera Daycare Center	Kirkos sub-city, Kazanchis area	37	19
2	Birhan Daycare Center	Bole sub-city around Medhanealem	24	17
3	Kibur Daycare Center	Kirkos sub-city around Hayahulet Mazoriya	61	37
4	Cruise Kindergarten (nursery class)	Kolfe Keranyo sub-city around Old Air Port	204	25
5	Misrak Kindergarten and Elementary	Kirkos sub-city, Wuha Limat area	310	60

As shown in Table 2, the toddlers from 47 different families belong to three age groups.

*Table 2: Age groups of the children*

AGE OF TODDLERS	NUMBER OF CHILDREN
2 and 3 years	22
4 years	15
5 years	10
Total	47

The 47 families rated their children's communicative skills in four categories.

Table 3 below shows the anticipated level of the children language skills.

*Table 3: Parents' rating of their children's language skill*

RATING	NUMBER OF CHILDREN
Very good	14
Good	13
Medium	11
Low	9
Total	47

An additional question regarding the communicative problems was asked to the parents who rated their children's language skill with 'low'. The following are the most frequent answers:

1. Limited interaction between toddlers and parents due to lack of time and single parenthood,
2. The children stay at home,
3. Only one child in the family.

Respondents were asked to write down the average number of words their children are able to pronounce. Table 4 shows the average number of words known by children.

*Table 4: Number of words used by children of various age*

NUMBER OF WORDS	NUMBER OF CHILDREN	AGE
10–15	10	2
16–20	12	3
21–25	11	4
Above 26	14	5

Respondents listed a variety of words for the question whether there are words their children cannot pronounce. There was an additional cross-question that asks respondents to list the words their children can pronounce. Using these two questions, the Baby Talk lexicon for Amharic was collected. Table 5 shows the items of the Baby Talk lexicon arranged into the semantic domains Food Items and Utensils, Other Utensils and Tools, Names, Animals, Body Parts/Excrements, and Others. In addition to the questionnaire data, Baby Talk items were collected by interviewing the children, their baby sitters and teachers, as well as by observing the children’s interaction in classroom and playgrounds. The observation also includes the interaction of the children with their parents and caregivers when they are brought to or taken from the campus.

Table 5: List of Baby Talk words with their correspondences in adult-directed speech

NO.	BABY TALK WORD	ADULT FORM OF THE WORD	GLOSS	SOURCE										FREQ	
				ADERA DC		BIRHAN DC		KIBUR DC		CRUISE KG		MISRAK KG			
				INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS		
<b>FOOD ITEMS AND UTENSILS</b>															
1.	a.	<i>əfu</i>	<i>gɜnfo</i>				✓								1
	b.	<i>ufu</i>													
2.	<i>ət'aje</i>		<i>ənɔ̄ɜra</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓				6
3.	a.	<i>əntulal</i>	<i>ənk'ulal</i>	✓	✓										2
	b.	<i>intulal</i>											✓		1
	c.	<i>ənkulal</i>					✓								1
	d.	<i>inkulal</i>									✓				1
4.	<i>babo</i>		<i>dabbo</i>				✓					✓			2
5.	a.	<i>bətʃk'o</i>	<i>bərtʃək'o</i>		✓						✓				2
	b.	<i>bətʃək'o</i>					✓								1

NO.	BABY TALK WORD	ADULT FORM OF THE WORD	GLOSS	SOURCE										FREQ		
				ADERA DC		BIRHAN DC		KIBUR DC		CRUISE KG		MISRAK KG				
				INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS			
6.	a.	<i>fəlfəl</i>	<i>fərfər</i>					✓								1
	b.	<i>fəlləf</i>												✓		1
	c.	<i>fəfəf</i>												✓		1
	d.	<i>fəfə</i>						✓								1
7.	<i>məsa</i>	<i>məsa</i>	‘food’		✓			✓						✓		3
8.	<i>mətoloni</i>	<i>makoroni</i>	‘noodle’	✓	✓								✓			3
9.	<i>muf</i>	<i>muz</i>	‘banana’		✓		✓				✓					3
10.	<i>nunuje</i>	<i>t’ut’o</i>	‘bottle feeder’			✓										1
11.	a.	<i>ñañña</i>	<i>məgəb</i>					✓						✓		2
	b.	<i>əññañña</i>	(general term)’											✓		1
12.	<i>fəntut</i>	<i>fənkurt</i>	‘onion’	✓							✓			✓		3

NO.	BABY TALK WORD	ADULT FORM OF THE WORD	GLOSS	SOURCE										FREQ		
				ADERA DC		BIRHAN DC		KIBUR DC		CRUISE KG		MISRAK KG				
				INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS			
13.	<i>tstolet</i>	<i>tʃskolet</i>	‘chocolate’	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		5
14.	<i>tolo</i>	<i>k’olo</i>	‘roasted grain’	✓		✓										2
15.	<i>t’ut’u</i>	<i>t’ut’o</i>	‘bottle feeder’			✓		✓		✓						3
16.	<i>tfa</i>	<i>ʃaj</i>	‘tea’		✓			✓		✓				✓		4
17.	<i>wu</i>	<i>wuha</i>	‘water’				✓			✓						2



NO.	BABY TALK WORD	ADULT FORM OF THE WORD	GLOSS	SOURCE												FREQ
				ADERA DC		BIRHAN DC		KIBUR DC		CRUISE KG		MISRAK KG				
				INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS			
	b.	<i>bofa</i>														
24.	a.	<i>fliɕ</i>	<i>friɕ</i>	'refrigerator'	✓	✓						✓				3
	b.	<i>fəliɕ</i>						✓								1
25.		<i>kalti</i>	<i>kalsi</i>	'socks'											✓	1
26.		<i>kulf</i>	<i>k'ulf</i>	'key'	✓	✓				✓		✓				4
27.	a.	<i>k'usat'ən</i>	<i>k'umsat'ən</i>	'cupboard'	✓		✓			✓		✓				4
	b.	<i>kusat'ən</i>					✓									1
28.	a.	<i>mətina</i>	<i>məkina</i>	'car'	✓	✓							✓			3
	b.	<i>pipi</i>				✓							✓			2
	c.	<i>bibi</i>				✓										1
29.	a.	<i>mət'əl</i>	<i>mək'əl</i>	'cross'				✓								1
	b.	<i>mətəl</i>														
30.		<i>mət'af</i>	<i>mək'haf</i>	'book'				✓								1

NO.	BABY TALK WORD	ADULT FORM OF THE WORD	GLOSS	SOURCE										FREQ	
				ADERA DC		BIRHAN DC		KIBUR DC		CRUISE KG		MISRAK KG			
				INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS		
31.	<i>mot</i>	<i>rimot</i>	'remote control'								✓			✓	2
32.	<i>motɜl</i>	<i>motɜr</i>	'motorcycle'				✓								1
33.	<i>səgut</i>	<i>ʃəgut'</i>	'pistol'	✓	✓		✓								3
34.	<i>suli</i>	<i>suri</i>	'trousers'	✓	✓								✓	✓	4
35.	a. <i>sɜt</i> b. <i>sɜlt</i>	<i>sɜlk</i>	'phone'	✓				✓			✓				3
36.	<i>ʃamuna</i>	<i>samuna</i>	'soap'		✓						✓		✓	✓	4
37.	<i>tot</i>	<i>kot</i>	'coat'			✓		✓							2
38.	<i>t'ama</i>	<i>tʃ'ama</i>	'shoe'										✓	✓	2
39.	a. <i>t'əbeza</i> b. <i>t'ɜbeza</i>	<i>t'ɜrɜbeza</i>	'table'	✓									✓	✓	3
40.	<i>tuwas</i>	<i>kuwas</i>	'ball'		✓		✓				✓				2

NO.	BABY TALK WORD	ADULT FORM OF THE WORD	GLOSS	SOURCE												FREQ
				ADERA DC		BIRHAN DC		KIBUR DC		CRUISE KG		MISRAK KG				
				INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS			
41.	a.	wawa	afangulit		✓	✓		✓					✓	✓	5	
	b.	asandulit			✓								✓	✓	3	
	c.	afanfulit											✓	✓	2	
42.	a.	zɜwazɜwe	zɜwazəwə	✓				✓								
	b.	zəwazəwe											✓	✓		
<b>NAMES</b>																
43.	a.	dada	abaje / abatje	✓	✓			✓				✓		✓	5	
	b.	aba			✓			✓				✓		✓	4	
	c.	ababa			✓			✓				✓		✓	4	
44.	a.	mama	əmajə					✓				✓		✓	3	
	b.	mami						✓				✓		✓	3	
	c.	mam					✓								1	
45.	mif	mis			✓			✓							2	

NO.	BABY TALK WORD	ADULT FORM OF THE WORD	GLOSS	SOURCE										FREQ		
				ADERA DC		BIRHAN DC		KIBUR DC		CRUISE KG		MISRAK KG				
				INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS			
46.	<i>akaki</i>	<i>ak'ak'i</i>	'Aqaqi (place)'	✓	✓			✓								3
47.	<i>dant'aje</i>	<i>dank'e</i>	'Denqea'				✓						✓			2
48.	<i>kəttət</i>	<i>k'ədəst</i>	'Kedist'			✓	✓						✓			3
49.	<i>məhamət</i>	<i>mohamməd</i>	'Mohammed'										✓			1
50.	<i>mitijas</i>	<i>mikijas</i>	'Mikiyas'	✓									✓			2
51.	<i>noni</i>	<i>ɕoni</i>	'Jonny'			✓							✓			2
52.	<i>ʃatʃw</i>	<i>alɕbatʃw</i>	'Alebachew'	✓		✓							✓			3
53.	<i>zər</i>	<i>zərjihun</i>	'Zerihun'			✓							✓			2
<b>ANIMALS</b>																
54.	<i>awu:</i>	<i>ɕəbb</i>	'hyena' <sup>2</sup>				✓						✓			2

<sup>2</sup> Also used in the sense of 'scary thing'.

NO.	BABY TALK WORD	ADULT FORM OF THE WORD	GLOSS	SOURCE										FREQ		
				ADERA DC		BIRHAN DC		KIBUR DC		CRUISE KG		MISRAK KG				
				INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS			
55.	<i>ba</i>	<i>b3g</i>	'sheep'					✓								1
56.	<i>kuku</i>	<i>doro</i>	'chicken'					✓								1
57.	a. <i>wu</i> b. <i>wuwu</i>	<i>wufa</i>	'dog'													1
<b>BODY PARTS / EXCREMENTS</b>																
58.	<i>and3t</i>	<i>ang3t</i>	'neck'		✓		✓									2
59.	a. <i>əfu</i> b. <i>ufu</i>	<i>ʃənt</i>	'urine'		✓				✓							1
60.	a. <i>buntʃ</i> b. <i>duntʃ</i>	<i>guntʃ</i>	'cheek'		✓		✓									2
61.	a. <i>dolo</i> b. <i>lolo</i>	<i>ɕoro</i>	'ear'		✓		✓									2
62.	<i>dənbər</i>	<i>gənbər</i>	'forehead'				✓									1

NO.	BABY TALK WORD	ADULT FORM OF THE WORD	GLOSS	SOURCE										FREQ		
				ADERA DC		BIRHAN DC		KIBUR DC		CRUISE KG		MISRAK KG				
				INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS			
63.	<i>kaka</i>	<i>k'ofafa</i>	'feces, dirt, bad item'	✓	✓		✓					✓				4
64.	<i>s'zdul</i>	<i>s'3gur</i>	'hair'					✓				✓				2
65.	<i>t'əs</i>	<i>t'ərs</i>	'tooth'			✓										1
<b>OTHERS</b>																
66.	<i>əda</i>	<i>əzza</i>	'there'		✓			✓				✓				3
67.	a. <i>əfu</i>	<i>əsət</i>	'fire' <sup>3</sup>		✓		✓					✓				3
	b. <i>ifu</i>															
	c. <i>ufu</i>															
68.	<i>ənda</i>	<i>lənda</i>	'Let me drive!'		✓	✓										2

<sup>3</sup> Also used for 'electric socket, electricity'.

NO.	BABY TALK WORD	ADULT FORM OF THE WORD	GLOSS	SOURCE												FREQ
				ADERA DC		BIRHAN DC		KIBUR DC		CRUISE KG		MISRAK KG				
				INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS	INT	OBS			
69.	<i>ənəhit</i>	<i>ənnəhid</i>	‘Let us go!’		✓			✓								2
70.	<i>bəld</i>	<i>bərd</i>	‘cold’	✓				✓		✓						3
71.	a. <i>duduf</i>	<i>lətʒñña</i>	‘Let me sleep!’	✓		✓						✓				3
	b. <i>duf</i>			✓		✓		✓								3
72.	a. <i>fəlfəl</i>	<i>fərfər</i>	‘stroll’		✓					✓						2
	b. <i>fəlləfəl</i>							✓								1
73.	<i>təbet</i>	<i>təmært bet</i>	‘school’	✓	✓					✓						3
74.	<i>tutulu</i>	<i>akukulu</i>	‘hide and seek game’	✓	✓			✓				✓				4
75.	<i>tʃa</i>	<i>tʃaw</i>	‘ciao!’	✓		✓										2
76.	<i>wɜdɜdɜ</i>	<i>wɜdɜk’ɜ</i>	‘He fall down.’		✓			✓				✓				3

Respondents also listed sounds that their children vocalize only with difficulties or not at all. According to this data, all children had difficulties with the ejectives *s'*, *tʃ'*, *p'*, *t'*, *k'*. Further, they did not utter the voiced fricatives *v*, *z*, *ʒ*. Some of the children could not pronounce the sonorant *r*.

Respondents gave several answers to the question how they teach new words to their children. Particularly, they were asked whether they pronounce the name of items like a toddler while they teach the new term. The following is the summary of the answers given:

1. Showing the item and telling the name
2. Through pronouncing the word as toddlers do
3. Putting sounds that are hard to pronounce in words

Parents listed a number of words as response to the question of whether their children use a single word as a name for two or more objects. The list of the words with multiple meanings contains the following items:

1. *ñañña* or *ət'aje* denoting 'food',
2. *əfu* denoting 'fire', 'electricity', 'hot porridge' or 'harmful objects',
3. *kaka* denoting 'feces', 'dirt', 'bad and spoiled things' and other harmful materials,
4. *awu* denoting 'hyena' or any 'scary thing'

The last question asked the parents to list down words their children created and which are still in use in the family. The words listed are not always restricted to a single family but are in wider usage. The widely known words include:

1. *əfu* 'fire' or 'hot things',
2. *bibi* 'car',
3. *əntaje* 'food',
4. *awu* 'hyena' and 'scary things',
5. *wuwu* 'dog'.

Further, names for close relatives like *baba* 'father', *mama* 'mother' are widely applicable whereas nicknames like *əgiḡa* for 'Ejegayehu' are less widely applicable.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### *5.1 Phonological Features*

Toddlers are naturally incapable of producing certain sounds or sound combinations of the adult language. Because of that, phonological simplifications of adult speech occur in Baby Talk to better suit the limitations of the toddlers' developing articulator and mental systems. Toddlers simplify the phonology of their lexicon through omission of syllables, cluster simplification, substitution of consonants as well as assimilation of consonants and vowels including distant assimilation.

##### 5.1.1 Syllable Structure of Baby Talk Items

Regarding the Amharic syllable, Baye (2000:21–23) lists the following possible basic syllable types: CV, CVC, VCC, and CVCC. The first two types, CV and CVC also frequently occur in Baby Talk, as shown in Table 6. Besides, VC and CVCC are also observed less frequently while VCC and CVCC were not recorded.

Table 6: Syllable types in Baby Talk

SYLLABLE TYPE	BABY TALK EXAMPLE	GLOSS
CV	<i>ba</i>	‘sheep’
	<i>tʃa</i>	‘tea, ciao’
CVC	<i>sʒt</i>	‘phone’
	<i>zʒr</i>	‘Zerihun’
CCV	<i>flidʒ</i>	‘refrigerator’
VC	<i>us</i>	‘clothes’
CVCC	<i>buntʃ</i>	‘cheek’
	<i>kulf</i>	‘key’

A total of 103 Baby Talk items that represent 79 items in adult speech were collected. During the count it has been observed that some Amharic items can be represented by two or more Baby Talk variants. These 103 Baby Talk items are broadly grouped into monosyllabic and multisyllabic. The items are distributed as follows: 21 monosyllabic, 48 bisyllabic, 23 trisyllabic, and 11 quadrisyllabic.

Most of the first toddler words collected are bisyllabic, i.e., 48 items, among which the type CV.CV prevails, as in *mə.sa* ‘food’, *to.lo* ‘roasted grain’, *bo.sa* ‘bag’, etc. Mono- and trisyllabic words are almost equally represented with 21 or 23 items, respectively. Quadrisyllabic words are less frequent with only 11 items. Words with more than four syllables were not recorded.

Further, there is a strong tendency towards open syllables, i.e., syllables ending in a vowel. Out of 103 recorded items, 55 items contained exclusively open syllables

while only 21 items contained exclusively closed syllables. The remaining items contain a mixture of closed and open syllables. Even heavy syllables, which end in two consonants, were recorded, as shown in the following table:

*Table 7: Baby Talk words ending in a heavy syllable*

TYPE	BABY TALK EXAMPLE	GLOSS	AGE
lC-cluster	<i>kulf</i>	‘key’	2–3
	<i>s3lt</i>	‘phone’	
	<i>b3ld</i>	‘cold’	
nC-cluster	<i>buntf</i>	‘cheek’	2–3
	<i>duntf</i>		
rm-cluster	<i>iniform</i>	‘uniform’	4
bs-cluster	<i>dəbs</i>	‘clothes’	2

As shown in the above table, toddlers utter heavy syllables ending in a consonant cluster. Because of their natural incapability of producing certain sound or sound combinations of the adult language, toddlers often simplify consonant clusters. However, the above table lists words in Amharic Baby Talk that the toddlers did not simplify.

### 5.1.2 Simplification of Clusters

Some toddlers simplify consonant clusters by leaving out one of the consonants. Consonant clusters of the type *rC* are often simplified by omitting the trill *r*, as in *bosa* or *bofa* for *borsa* ‘bag’, *t’əs* for *t’ərs* ‘teeth’, *bətf’k’o* for *bərtf’ək’o* ‘glass’. Similarly,

the toddlers utter *k'usat'ən* for *k'umsat'ən* 'wardrobe' by omitting the bilabial nasal *m* in the cluster *ms*.

In the collected data for this research, replacement of consonant clusters by occlusive sounds in Baby Talk was also observed, as in *ətbito* for *əskribto* 'pen' or *mət'af* for *məs'haf* 'book'.

### 5.1.3 Omission of Syllables

Syllable omission is another common feature observed in Amharic child language used by toddlers in the age of 2–5 years. For example, toddlers utter the Amharic word *wuʃa* 'dog' or *wuha* 'water' as *wu* by omitting the final syllables *ʃa* or *ha*, respectively. Other examples are *zər* for *z3.ri.hun* 'Zerihun', in which the final syllable and the vocalic nucleus of preceding syllable are omitted, or *mot* for *rimot* 'remote control', in which the initial syllable was omitted.

### 5.1.4 Consonant Substitution

In section 2.2.1 above it was stated that toddlers frequently substitute fricatives by stops. In Amharic Baby Talk, this substitution also occurs frequently, as in *t3tolet* for *ʃfekolet* 'chocolate' where *s* and *ʃf* are substituted by the stop *t*. In other words the velar plosive *k* is substituted by the alveolar stop *t*, as in *mətina* for *məkina* 'car', *ʃəntut* for *ʃənkurt* 'onion', *mitijas* for *mikijas* 'Mikiyas'.

Some toddlers substituted ejective sounds by non-ejective stops. For instance, toddlers most frequently substituted the velar ejective *k'* by the non-ejective velar plosive *k*, or the alveolar ejective *t'* by the alveolar plosive *t*. This is one of the dominant features observed in Amharic Baby Talk. The substitution can be seen in *akaki* for *ak'ak'i* 'Aqaqi (place name)', *intulal* for *ɛnk'ulal* 'egg', *kulf* for *k'ulf* 'key', or *səgut* for *ʃəgut* 'gun'.

Furthermore, the substitution of *r* in adult speech by *l* is a prominent feature of Amharic Baby Talk, as in as in *bəld* for *bərd* 'cold', *fəliɕ* for *fəriɕ* 'refrigerator', *ʃəʃəl* for *ʃərʃər* 'stroll', *mɛtoloni* for *mɛkoroni* 'noodles', *motel* for *moter* 'motorcycle', *dolo* for *ɕoro* 'ear', *əsəlas* for *ərsas* 'pencil'.

### 5.1.5 Stopping

Stopping is also observed in Amharic Baby Talk, as *əda* for *əzza* 'there' where the alveolar fricative *z* is changed to the alveolar plosive *d*, or *kalti* for *kalsi* 'sock' where the fricative *s* is changed to the plosive *t* in Baby Talk.

### 5.1.6 Fronting

Fronting is another feature detected in data: *tolo* for *k'olo* 'roasted grain' or *sət* for *səlk* 'phone', *mɛtoloni* for *makoroni* 'noodles', *mɛstɛl* for *mɛsk'ɛl* 'cross', or *wɛdɛdɛ* for *wɛddɛk'ɛ* 'fall down'.

### 5.1.7 Assimilation

Consonant and vowel assimilation through reduplication of entire syllables can occur in Baby Talk. Assimilation that occurred through reduplication of entire syllables are *ma.ma* ‘mother’, *ba.ba* ‘father’ by reduplicating the single syllable *ma* and *ba*, respectively. This phenomenon can also be observed in the Baby Talk item *ka.ka* for *k’ofa* ‘dirt’, whereby the velar ejective *k’* changed into the velar plosive *k*.

Assimilation across non-reduplicated syllables only occurs in the onset of syllables and concerns the bilabial plosive *b*. This assimilation occurred in *ba.bo* for *da.bo* ‘pancake’ or *b3m.b3r* for *w3n.b3r* ‘chair’. This feature, distance assimilation, is similar to Ferguson (1964) with the difference that Ferguson observed nasal assimilation while in Amharic the feature observed is bilabial assimilation.

### 5.1.8 Phonological Features of Baby Talk not Found in Adult Speech

Every language has its own phonological, morphological and syntactic features. With regard to Amharic, Baye (2000:21) observes that no word starts with a consonant phoneme *ñ*. Furthermore, Baye (2000:20) states that the vowels *ə*, *a*, *a* appear word-initially in Amharic while the vowels *i*, *e*, *u* and *o* do not. According to him, the English word ‘Jesus’ is supposed to be uttered as *\*ij3sus* in Amharic with an initial *i*. However, as no word in Amharic starts with this vowel, it was replaced by *ə* yielding *əj3sus*.

In this research, one special feature that does not exist in Amharic phonology of adult speech was observed, namely the occurrence of word-initial *ñ* in *ñañña* ‘food (general term)’. Further, another violation of Amharic phonological constraints can be observed in Baby Talk items starting with the vowel *i* or *u*, as in *ufu~ifu* ‘fire’.

## 5.2 Morphosyntactic Features of Baby Talk

Nouns from the toddlers’ immediate environment are commonly part of the Baby Talk lexicon rather than verbs. In Amharic Baby Talk the situation is similar. Most of the items listed in Table 5 in section 4 above are nouns. Only one item has a deictic meaning, namely *ada* ‘there’ whose utterance seems always to be accompanied by showing the place of toys or objects the toddlers are focusing on or when they want their parents and caregivers to move them from their cradle bed or hold them up.

Some toddlers use one-word sentences as shown in Table 8:

*Table 8: One-word sentences in Baby Talk*

NO.	BABY TALK	ADULT SPEECH	GLOSS
a.	<i>anda</i>	<i>landa</i>	‘Let (me/us) drive!’
b.	<i>anahit</i>	<i>anahid</i>	‘Let (me/us) go!’
c.	<i>duduf</i>	<i>latñña</i>	‘Let (me/us) sleep!’
d.	<i>w3d3d3</i>	<i>w3d3k’3</i>	‘He (she/it/I) fell down’

The examples a and b in Table 8 consist of a single word in Amharic adult speech with the meaning ‘Let me drive!’ or ‘Let us go!’, respectively. The simple grammatical nature of these sentences has made it easy for the toddlers to use these sentences. However, the subject referent in Baby Talk is not specific as in adult speech, i.e., the toddlers may refer only to themselves (‘me’) or to themselves and somebody else (inclusive ‘we’). In example c in Table 8, however, the adult speech equivalent is replaced by a special Baby Talk item, *duduf* ‘Let me/us sleep!’ without proper Amharic subject agreement. All three examples, a, b and c in Table 8, denote a kind of imperative expression. The only recorded declarative expression occurs in example d in Table 8. While the subject agreement in the adult speech variant is fixed to the third person singular masculine (or neuter) ‘he/it’, its use in Baby Talk may also refer to ‘I’ or ‘she’ as subject.

Generally, the toddlers do not construct sentences considering subject agreement, nor do they use object pronouns and possessive affixes that are common in adult-speech Amharic. Besides, the toddlers utter one-word sentences with a noun when they want to communicate an order or request. For example, they utter *bibi* ‘car’ when they want to convey the imperative “Give me the car!”

### 5.3 Uses of the Baby Talk Lexicon

It was mentioned in section 2.3.1 above that infant-directed speech used by parents and caregivers plays a significant role in the children’s language development

because early language learning of toddlers is dominantly learning through hearing. In this learning process, the words toddlers know preclude them to apply them to similar items or situations. Therefore, the interaction with the speech community enables the toddlers to acquire the meanings and forms of the language.

During the data collection the researcher observed once that the toddlers identified hot things as painful and named them *əfu*. Their parents and caregivers use this word to represent all things they do not want the toddlers to touch. As a result, the toddlers learn to use the word *əfu* for sharp materials, fire and hot objects in general.

Furthermore, parents and caregivers also create Baby Talk words by replacing sounds that the toddlers can hardly pronounce. The adults use the Baby Talk words in their daily communication with their children. For example, many parents knew that their children cannot utter the sound *r* and, thus, purposely replaced it with *l* in some words, just the way the toddlers would do. Further, in the interview conducted with kindergarten teachers, it was stated that they use the Baby Talk words their senior students created while they communicate with their younger students. Such a procedure makes the language acquisition process easier for the toddlers.

## 5.4 *Semantic and Pragmatic Analysis of Items*

### 5.4.1 Source of Some Baby Talk Words

In their early age, toddlers utter mainly nouns that denote the name of family members or close persons, animals, food items and objects in their everyday surrounding (cf. Table 5). Toddlers interact with adults in different ways that include babbling, gesturing and uttering some words. Because of their natural incapability of producing certain sounds, toddlers create words by imitating sounds from their environment and associate them to objects from which they originate while communicating with adults. Toddlers also create words of their own by developing and refining them from the language of their conversation with adults.

For example, toddlers utter *ñañña* to denote any kind of food. This Baby Talk word might emanate from the sound the toddlers hear while they chew their foods; consequently, they name all objects that can be eaten with that sound combination. This is conforming to the behavioral explanation of language acquisition. The toddlers use these words predominantly to represent all types of food items, and less dominantly to refer to breast or bottle feeder. Other examples include *əfu* for ‘urine/urination’ or *pipi* for ‘car’. Both Baby Talk words are similar to the sounds created when the toddlers urinate or a car honks. First, the toddlers hear a certain sound close to *əfu* when they urinate. As result, they call urine or the process of urination by this sound combination. Then, it may be extended in its meaning to ‘toilet’ in general. Similarly, the toddlers might perceive the sound of a car horn as

*pipi* and then use this sound combination to denote all kinds of cars and some of their toys similar to cars.

In addition, toddlers may create some words based on the sounds as response to some immediate encounter. For example, they use the word *əfu* to represent ‘fire’. The word is similar to the sound the toddlers create as response to hot objects they accidentally touch and feel the pain. It is also similar to the sound of adults breathes while making a fire; and the sound when their parents cool a hot porridge with a spoon. Accordingly, the toddlers predominantly use the word *əfu* for fire and hot objects and less dominantly for light bulbs and leaves of stinging nettles.

Moreover among the item collected, three Baby Talk items are homonyms. 91 toddlers utter the same sound *wu* to represent *wuha* ‘water’ and *wufa* ‘dog’. Similarly they utter *əfu* when they refer to *əsat* ‘fire’ or *gənfə* ‘porridge’. Similarly the Baby Talk item *bibi* represents *məkina* ‘car’ and *əfangulit* ‘toy’.

#### 5.4.2 Dominant and Less Dominant Semantics of Baby Talk Words

Several Baby Talk words are used to represent one, two or more meanings. The following table lists examples of Baby Talk words in their dominant and less dominant meanings.

Table 9: Dominant and less dominant semantics of Baby Talk words

BABY TALK WORDS	SEMANTICS	
	DOMINANT	LESS DOMINANT
<i>ət'aje</i>	'local pancake'	'breast, bottle feeder'
<i>afu</i>	'fire, hot objects and light bulbs'	'any kind of harmful sharp items, plugs, sockets, etc. not to be touched by the toddlers'
<i>kaka</i>	'feces and other dirty material'	'any item, place prohibited through the caregivers'
<i>babo</i>	'bread'	'genitals'
<i>aba</i>	'father'	'any male member of the family'
<i>mama</i>	'mother'	'any female member of the family'

Most toddlers, for instance, predominantly use the Baby Talk word *kaka* when they refer to their stool and dirt materials around them. The word *kaka* less dominantly refers to toilet as well. In addition, parents and caregivers use it when they refer to some items that they do not allow the toddlers to touch or taste.

The word *babo* means bread in its predominant usage. The same word is less often used to refer to the toddlers' genitals, for the actual words are considered taboo in Amharic.

### 5.5 Baby Talk in Adult Speech

Baby Talk words are not always confined to the specific family or to a small area. They are also used among speakers beyond the family level. The same phenomenon

is seen in Amharic where adults sometimes use Baby Talk words in their daily communication. According to responses, some adult family members have kept using Baby Talk words such as *aba*, *ababa*, *dada*, and *əmama*, *mama* to call their mother and father, respectively. Further, in one of the families the researcher was told that an toddler used to call a girl named *əḫigajɜhu* as *əḫiḫa*. Then the rest of the family and other relatives also used the Baby Talk name to call her and are still using it today. In addition to the parents? the girl's school friends and neighbors also use this nickname.

The Baby Talk lexicon may also influence the development of the vocabulary in adult speech. Accordingly, the researcher could observe how adults use some Amharic Baby Talk words in informal speech. As respondents stated, adults use Baby Talk words when referring to something that they feel is taboo to say in public. For example, adults may refer to sexual intercourse or the female genital organs by using the Baby Talk word *babo* 'bread, genitals'.

This shows that adults from different areas and backgrounds understand the meanings of the Baby Talk words. Such common understanding shows the potential of Baby Talk words to become part of the Amharic adult-directed speech vocabulary.

## CHAPTER SIX

### FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

#### 6.1 Findings

The findings of this research are as follows:

- i. Some features that do not exist in Amharic phonology have been found in Baby Talk words. Though no Amharic word starts with the consonant *ñ* or the vowels *i* and *u*, Baby Talk items that start with these sounds occur, like *ñaña* ‘food’, *intulal* ‘egg’ or *ufu* ‘fire’.
- ii. Most works on Baby Talk state that its lexicon only contains nouns and simple verbs. The Amharic Baby Talk lexicon contains additionally the spatial deictic adverb *ada* ‘there’.
- iii. Some of the Amharic Baby Talk items have more than one meaning.

#### 6.2 Conclusion

In all speech communities, child language has great significance in language acquisition and development. It fosters the communication of toddlers with people around them. This research was designed with two objectives. The first objective was describing common items in the Amharic Baby Talk lexicon. In doing so, a total of 103 words which stand for 79 items have been collected used for communication with children whose age ranges from 2–5 years.

The 103 Baby Talk words include kin names, food types, names of places, names for utensils and tools, and others. Among these, most of the collected words denote food items or tools and utensils.

The second objective was analyzing the Baby Talk lexicon with regard to its phonological and morphological features. While examining its phonological features, processes like simplification of consonant clusters, omission of syllables, consonant substitution, consonant and vowel assimilation and distant assimilation were observed.

Morphological and syntactic features of the Baby Talk lexicon were also described. In addition to simplification, toddlers use Amharic sentences without clear subject agreement.

The toddlers learn baby Talk items through imitating the sound from their surroundings and by extracting words from the adult language that are refined during their conversation with the adults. The toddlers use many items to represent more than one meaning.

Finally, it was shown that Baby Talk items might become part of the normal adult language lexicon.

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# APPENDIX

አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ

ኮሌጅ ኦፍ ሂዩማኒቲስ

የቋንቋዎች ጥናት፣ ጆርናሊዝም እና ኮሚዩኒኬሽንስ

የስነልሳን ትምህርት ክፍል

በቤተሰብ ፣ በተንከባካቢ እንዲሁም በመምህራን የሚሞላ መጠይቅ

መግቢያ፡ የዚህ መጠይቅ ዋና አላማ በአዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ በስነልሳን ትምህርት ክፍል የሁለተኛ ዲግሪ / ማስተርስ/ ማሙያ ጥናት የሚሆን መረጃን ለመሰብሰብ የተዘጋጀ ነው። በመሆኑም ጥያቄዎቹን በአግባቡ አንብበው ትክክለኛውን ምላሽ በወቅቱ መስጠት የጥናቱን አላማ ከግብ ለማድረስ ከፍተኛ አስተዋጽኦ አለው።

እባክዎን ይህን ያስተውሉ፡

- ስምዎን መጻፍ አያስፈልግም
- አማራጭ በተሠጥዎት ጥያቄዎች ላይ መልስ ለመስጠት በቀረበው ሳጥን ውስጥ የ “X” ምልክት ያስፍሩ
- ማብራሪያ ለሚሹት ጥያቄዎች ሃሳብዎን በአጭሩና በግልፅ ያስቀምጡ

ጊዜዎን መሰዋዕት አድርገው ይህንን መጠይቅ በመሙላትዎ አስቀድምን እናመሰግንዎታለን።

## 1. ለቤተሰብ

### I. ግላዊ መረጃ

የታ-----

አፍ መፍቻ ቋንቋ

ተጨማሪ ቋንቋ

II. የልጅ እድሜ / ከአንድ በላይ መምረጥ ይቻላል

2-3 ዓመት	<input type="checkbox"/>	5ዓመት	<input type="checkbox"/>
4ዓመት	<input type="checkbox"/>	6ዓመት	<input type="checkbox"/>

III. የልጅዎትን የቋንቋ ክህሎት በየትኛው ደረጃ ይመድቡታል

ደካማ	<input type="checkbox"/>	ጥሩ	<input type="checkbox"/>
በጣም ጥሩ	<input type="checkbox"/>	የላቀ	<input type="checkbox"/>

“ደካማ” የሚለውን ከመረጡ ምን አይነት ችግሮች አሉበት/አሉባት? በዝርዝር ያስቀምጡ።

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መቻል ያለባቸው ነገር ግን እስካሁን አልቻሏቸውም የሚሏቸው ቃላት አሉ

ከምግብ

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ከቤት እቃ

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ከመጫወቻ፣መገልገያ ቁሳቁሶች

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ከቤተሰብ ስም

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የሚከብዱቸው ፊደላት አሉ ፡ ለምሳሌ-"ቀ"፣ "ጨ"....

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ልጅዎት ቃላትን አቀላት፤ የሚናገር ከሆነ፤ በስንት አመቱ ነው አቀላጥፎ መናገር የጀመረው

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IV. የህፃን ልጅዎን የቋንቋ ክህሎት ከታላቁ ጋር ሲያወዳድሩት እንዴት ይገልጹታል ?

V. ልጅዎ በአማካኝ ምን ያህል ቃላትን ያውቃል?

10-15

21-25

16-20

26-30

ከ 30 በላይ

እባክዎ የተወሰኑትን ይዘርዝሩ/ ከተቻለ ሁሉንም፡-

ከምግብ

ከቤት እቃ

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ከመጫወቻ፣ መገልገያ ቁሳቁሶች

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VI. ልጆች አብዛኛው የሚጠቀሟቸውን/የሚጠራቸውን/ ቃላትን በዝርዝር ያስቀምጡት? ህፃኑ በሚጠቀምበት መንገድ፣ ስምሳሌ “እንጣዬ”...፤ የፈጠራቸውም ካሉ..

ከምግብ

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ከቤት እቃ

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ከመጫወቻ፣ መገልገያ ቁሳቁሶች

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ከቤተሰብ ስም

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VII. በቤተሰብዎ ውስጥ ምን ያህል ቋንቋ ይነገራል? ይዘርዝሯቸውና የትኛውን ቋንቋ የትኛው የቤተሰባችሁ አባል እንደሚናገረው ያመልክቱ።

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VIII. **ልጅዎ ቃላትን በሚናገርበት ጊዜ በቤተሰብዎ ውስጥ ከሚነገሩት ቋንቋዎች መካከል ይቀላቅላል? የትኞቹ ቃላቶች ከየትኛው ቋንቋ ወሰደው መሆኑን በማመልከት በዝርዝር ያስቀምጧቸው።**

ከምግብ

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ከቤት እቃ

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ከመጫወቻ፣መገልገያ ቁሳቁሶች

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ከቤተሰብ ስም

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IX. **ልጆችዎን ቃላት ለማስተማር ሲሞክሩ እንዴት ነው? ለምሳሌ ብረድስት እያሳዩ ልክ ህፃናቱ እንደሚጠሩት “ድድስት” ይላሉ፣ በትክክል ይጠሩታል፣ ወይስ ሌላ የሚጠቀሙት መንገድ አለ፣የግለፁት።**

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X. **ልጅዎት የተለያየ ሃሳብን ለመግለፅ የሚጠቀምባቸው ተመሳሳይ ቃላት አሉት? ይዘርዝሩት ለምሳሌ: ለዳቦም ፣ለእንጀራም - “እንጣዬ”**

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XI. **ልጆችዎት የፈጠራቸው ሆነው ቤተሰባችሁ ውስጥ እስካሁን የምትጠቀሙበት ቃላት አሉ ? ይዘርዝሩት**

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.....

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**

**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES,**

**LANGUAGE STUDIES, JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATIONS**

**DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS**

**Questionnaire to be filled by families, caregivers and teachers**

**Introduction:** The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information regarding the fulfillment for Master's Degree Research in General Linguistics. Thus, your frank, sincere and timely responses to the items in the questionnaire help to meet the objective of the study.

**Please note that:**

- **No need of writing your name**
- **Where alternative answers are given, please mark your answer using a “×” in the corresponding box.**
- **Please be as brief as possible in answering the open ended questions**

**Thank you in advance for taking time to complete the questionnaire**

**1. Interview Questions**

**I. To Parents**

1. At what age did your child start using words?
2. What were the first words your child used/is using? (Name of materials, peoples....) And did you understand him/her easily?
3. Which sounds were /are difficult to utter for your child at his/her early age?
4. With which word did he/she replace the difficult sounds?
5. Is/are there any baby talk (words) commonly used in your language?
6. Is your child freely interacting with all of the family members, or is he/she selective?
7. Are there any words your child bring from school/day care centers? (It could be names of materials, people, etc...)

**II. To day-care baby sitters and kindergarten teachers:**

1. Could you explain the language skills of children in your class, specially stating their ages?
2. What are the most frequently used words by the children?
3. Do the children bring new words from their homes? (It could be names of materials, people, etc...)
4. How do you talk to the children under your care? ( your tones, melody, intonations of encouragement and others...)

❖ **Exclusively for kg teachers**

1. How do you make clear ideas/names for the babies while they could not understand your words/speech? (the methods you use...)
2. What are major problems which affect your communication while you communicate with babies? List them down!
3. How do the kids express themselves to convey their idea to you? (Do they repeat, point at things or/and replace sentences by words...)
4. What are the most common words and /or sentences of baby talk?

**5. Questionnaire**

2.1 For Parents

2.1.1. Personal data

Please indicate first the following personal data:

Sex

Mother tongue

Other languages

1-Age of your children

2-3yrs

5yrs

4yrs

6yrs

2-Rate your youngest child's language skills

Poor

Good

V. good

Excellent

If your answer for the above is "poor", what are the problems your child encounter?

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5. (If u have older child...,) how do you rate his/her language skill in comparison to the younger one?

4-indicate the Number of words at average your child knows

10-15

21-25

16-20

26-30

5-what are the main words your child developed? (List them down, please)

.....  
.....  
.....

6.How many languages are spoken in your family? List them down, and indicating who of your family uses which language.

Does your child mix words from two or more languages spoken in your family? If yes, provide examples.

Are there differences in the way you or another family member speak to your child? If yes, provide examples.

7-What are words that your babies use for the same ideas? – A word uses for different ideas; Please list down

**2. Observation**

The researcher will plan observe children in some areas. The observations are conducted in children hospitals, day cares, resident houses, kindergartens, hotels, and some play grounds.

The observations are intended to meet the following areas in specific

- i. Identifying the most commonly used Amharic lexicon by babies from different family backgrounds.
- ii. Identify words that they use with their friends rather than others like family and teacher/ any differences of babies talk for their families and their friends.
- iii. Make a list of baby talk lexicon which the babies are using to express their full idea; equivalent to phrases and sentences.
- iv. Listing down the BT lexicons by collecting the most commonly used words by babies.
- v. Identify activities which motivate them to talk more (while playing, interacting with their parents and teachers.....)

## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work. This thesis has not been presented for any academic study in any other university, and all sources of material used for this work are clearly acknowledged.

Name

Signature

Date