

Verb Naming in Telugu School Children

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Abstract

Aim: The aim of the study was to find out whether children acquire verb naming in early or late childhood and also to find out whether verb naming is stabilized in 5 to 6 years of age children's.

Method: The study was based on 50 school going Telugu children among these, 25 children were from 3 to 4 years and again 25 children were from 5 to 6 years. A set of 25 action pictures were used as the stimuli to elicit verb naming in both groups.

Results and Discussion: Children have more number of verbal forms compared to nouns. It describes static misnaming, dynamic misnaming, semantically related and unrelated verbs. When we look overall data, we find that the verb "agi vundi" (waiting) was not named at all in 3 to 4-year age group, whereas one child could name it in 5 to 6 year age group. Hence, we can conclude that this was most complex verb for children to comprehend and name.

Summary and Conclusion: While acquiring a language, children pass through various stages of developments. Verb develop (1-1.6), 2- Word stage (1¹/₂ – 2yrs), telegraphic speech (2-3yrs) and full competence stage (4 – 5yrs). Present investigator thought it appropriate to explore their development in Telugu speaking children, as there are very few studies on this aspect in Telugu. The present study delves deep into naming of transitive verbs in both groups of Telugu children.

Key Words: verbs, naming, age of acquisition.

Introduction

Language acquisition is a universal phenomenon among, children of different languages. Verb naming is an important aspect of a child's syntactic and semantic development and follows various hierarchical stages. The present study investigates into acquisition of verb naming in 3 to 4 and 5 to 6-year-old school going Telugu children from Andhra Pradesh.

Verbs can be notionally characterized as words referring to actions, states, processes or relations – play, eat, hold, fix, sit, stand, fall and move. However, know is a verb, but not an action, and action is a noun. Hence, verbs can be referring to concrete actions and abstract ones.

Semantically, verbs can be divided into the following semantic fields.

- a) Verbs of motion – come, go, bring
- b) Verbs of possession – have, buy, inherit, gave, keep, save, find etc.
- c) Verbs of vision – see, look, sight, peep, glance at, gape, peer
- d) Verbs of communication – speak, sing, shout, whisper, cry, roar, coo

Syntactically, verbs can be divided into auxiliaries and main verbs, finite and infinite verbs, transitive and intransitive verbs. The focus of present study is on naming of transitive and intransitive verbs.

Transitive and Intransitive verbs: Transitive verb is a verb which takes a direct object expressed or implied, and if required an indirect object.

E.g., Seethe sings a song.

An intransitive verb does not take a direct object.

E.g., Radha smiles.

Cognitive linguistics holds that linguistic categories (such as nouns & verbs) are formed via general cognitive processes. That is, conceptual structures are influenced by perception, social cues and non-linguistic embodied knowledge.

Verbs are linguistic symbols that designate events. Each event contains one or more entities, these entities undergo changes depending on the situation and language specific feature (D. Vasanta & B. Lakshmi Bai, 2011).

During the last two decades, psychologists and psycholinguists have become increasingly interested in representation and processing differences between nouns and verbs. There is now a large volume of literature that shows verbs are acquired later than nouns and tend to be more impaired in developmental language disorders and there are many more cases

of verb impaired aphasic patients. There is also evidence that young and elderly adults perform somewhat less well in action naming (producing action verbs) than in object naming (producing nouns).

The semantic representations of verbs have traditionally been considered to be more complex than those of nouns. Verbs by virtue of their argument structure, always entail reference to related nouns (i.e., actor and the acted upon instrument, location etc.,) and have therefore always an implicit syntactic context even when the nouns have not materialised. Verbs determine the number and types of arguments around them. Different verbs have different argument structures (e.g., verbs such as “knee” and “yawn” have only one argument; “love” and “kick” have two arguments; “put” and “give” have three arguments) and some verbs (e.g., eat, write, believe) have more than one argument structure (e.g., yesterday I did not eat much; yesterday I ate three meals).

There has been general agreement among researchers that nouns are acquired earlier than verbs. The conceptual saliency of objects as opposed to actions and the more compact and hierarchical semantic organisation of nouns have been singled out as the main reasons for a noun advantage in early language acquisition by Gentner, who proposed the Natural Partitions Hypothesis. Grammatical complexities involved in verb production have also been cited as a contributing factor in their late development, though evidence for their role in language acquisition is more difficult to find.

The acquisition of semantics

When children hear a word for the first time they have no way of knowing what makes the use of the word appropriate. Children produce their first words at age one. A child knows 1000 words by age 3, 10,000 words by age 6. However, there are no definite stages in semantic development.

Semantic systems

The knowledge of individual lexical items that speakers must have to understand sentences and to relate them to the knowledge of the world.

Over-extension

The feature of four legged might be extended from its original referent “doggie” to cover dogs, horses, cow, sheep and cats. Over extensions results, when the range of words is extended beyond that of normal adults. E.g., A child may give moon as the name for cakes, round marks, post marks and the letter o.

E.g., A child may over extend the word tick tock to refer to clocks, watches, parking meters.

Children define over extension of a word in terms of perceptual feature – shape, size, colour or taste. Once the child learns semantic features of a word, it will not over extend the word on knowing the word – doggie with its semantic feature. E.g., Four doggies, it will no longer extend the word doggie to slippers, rugs and boats.

Under-extension

Under-extension occurs, when words are used for a narrow range of objects or events. Child insists on labelling a buttoned – up sweater – as a shirt, instead of recognizing its membership in the sweater category.

Polar opposite, positive/ negative pairs and marked / unmarked pairs

Children appear to confuse the meaning of word pairs, which are closely related by being opposite poles along a single dimension. In word pairs like more/less, big/little, tall/short, the meaning of the pair is often extended to cover both words and it is the unmarked or positive form, which does this. E.g., Three-year olds often treat less as if it meant more. Four and five-year olds treat big as a synonym for many unmarked adjectives like big, tall, long, wide, thick, old, while small is treated as synonym for many marked adjectives like short, thin, low, young, shallow.

Word association and grammatical relations

Children’s responses usually make anomalous connections with their stimuli. E.g: soft wall, bright rake and fast – shout are stimuli – response connections given in association by 6 and 7 years. There are two types of associations, which children make in response to stimuli.

- a) Paradigmatic – stimuli & response belonging to same grammatical class. cat – dog.

- b) Syntagmatic – if stimuli & response belong to two different classes, the association is called syntagmatic. Dog – barks.

Young children mostly respond with syntagmatic associations, whereas older children and adults respond mostly with paradigmatic associations. With age, the tendency of preschool children to give lengthy responses decreases and the school children will give single-word associations in free -association tests.

Learning the meaning of new words to verbal context

Nouns, verbs and the interjections are very common as early words. The child may learn the meaning of these new words by having the adult name define them for the child or by “fast mapping”. Adults do often name objects for children, but much learning comes from overheard speech as well. Noun is a concrete item as children’s nouns often have the concrete features of size, shape and visual contour. Verbs are usually actions, typically human or animal movements.

Creating new verbs from nouns

Vocabulary about actions lags behind that of objects. So children create a new verb for particular action from the nouns for the entities involved in the actions they wish to talk about. Adults do often make verbs out of nouns (denominal verbs), but the children apply their rule too generally, so that sweep replaces broom, drive > car, fly > aeroplane, shoot > gun.

Semantic networks

Kinship systems, pronouns, space and time are learned relatively early. Flowers are a term at the appropriate level. It is used because they are to be sniffed and enjoyed, but not eaten or stamped. Children start categorizing at 1,6m.

Semantically anomalous sentences

Between 6 & 8 years age, children differentiate anomalous and fully grammatical sentences.

Need for the study

Although there are many studies on verb naming among A.D, FTD, and aphasics, there are hardly any studies on verb naming in children in Indian languages. Hence this study will be pioneering attempt in this direction in Telugu language.

Aims and objectives

- To find out whether children acquire verb naming in early or late childhood.
- To find out whether verb naming is stabilized in 5 to 6 years.

Method

The study is based on fifty school going Telugu children from Andhra Pradesh (A.P). Among these, 25 children were 3 to 4 years from Anganwavidy School and again 25 children were 5 to 6 years from Mandala Parishad Primary School.

Table 1.

Demographic data for participants

Age range	Boys	Girls	Total
3– 4 years	7	18	25
5 - 6 years	14	11	25

Procedure

A set of 25 action pictures were used as the stimuli to elicit verb naming in children. The investigator showed children's to pictures one by one and asked them, to describe what is happening in the pictures. Responses were recorded on the mobile phone and later transferred in to laptop system then data was transcribed and analysed.

Results and Discussion

Verb naming is an integral part of child's language development. Children have more number of verbal forms compared to nouns. This study focuses on verb naming in 3 to 4yrs and 5 to 6year old Telugu speaking children. It describes static misnaming, dynamic

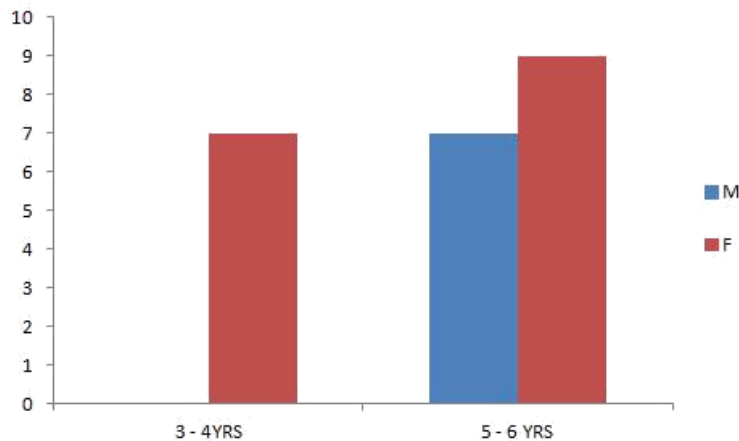
misnaming, semantically related and unrelated verbs. It also examines the frequency level of verbs in 3 to 4yrs and 5 to 6yrs age group. Here is the comprehensive discussion of verb naming across different categories in the two age groups mentioned in the study. Following are the aspects of verb naming seen in Telugu children of present study.

Static Misnaming:

Examples:

- 1) Train agi vundi – Train
(Train is wating) – (Train)
- 2) Amma kodutundi–Amma
(Mother is beating) – (Mother)
- 3) Thatha kate patukoni gudiki pothunadu –katte patukunadu
(Grandfather is going to temple with stick) - (Holding the stick)
- 4) Akulu ralipothunayi–Akulu
(Leaves are falling down) – (Leaves)

Graph 1.



Static misnaming is the misnaming, where the verbal forms are deleted. Static misnaming's seen in both the age groups in verb naming. However 3 to 4 year age group, only girls had static misnaming. That too in a very small number (F-1.07%) In the 5 to 6-year age group, very few static misnaming's were found, but the difference between boys and girls were less significant. (M – 1.07%, F – 1.3%).

Dynamic misnaming

Examples:1) Akulu ralipotunayi – Akulu Vuripotunayi

(Leaves are falling down) – (Leaves are going)

2) Candle ni antiestunadu – Candle tho adukuntunadu

(Lighting the candle) – (Playing with the candle)

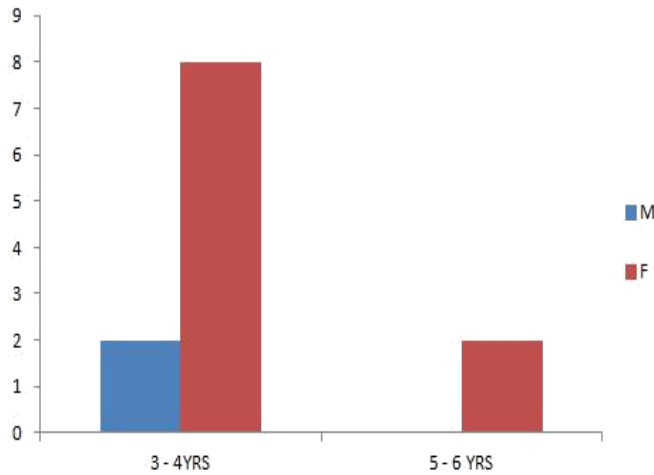
3) Avva pulu konukuntundi – Avva pulu tesukuntudi

(Grandmother is buying flowers) – (Grandmother is taking flowers)

4) Book chaduvutunadu – Book chustunadu

(Reading the book)- (Seeing the book)

Graph 2.



In dynamic misnaming's, either one element is singled out from the general composition of action. [ex: Alakulu ralipotunayi – Alakulu vudipotunayi] or an equivalent or more generalized attribute is substituted. [ex: Thata gudiki potunadu – thata potunadu]. Dynamic misnaming's were found in both 3 to 4 and 5 to 6-year age groups. They were not seen among boys, girls had very few of them (5- 6 yrs. M – 0, F – 0.3%). In 5 to 6year age group, however there were more significant differences between girls and boys in terms of production of dynamic misnaming for action verbs. But in 3 to 4-year age group, number of such misnaming's were very nominal.

According to B. Sudheer (2000). fluent aphasics had dynamic misnaming, but non fluent aphasic has more static misnaming. The present study reveals that dynamic and static

misnaming's were found in both 3 to 4 and 5 to 6 year Telugu children. Both this misnaming were found more among girls in 3 to 4 year age group and more among boys in 5 to 6 year age group. The study finds age related differences in static and dynamic misnaming, whereas the earlier mentioned study finds these differences across fluent and non- fluent aphasics.

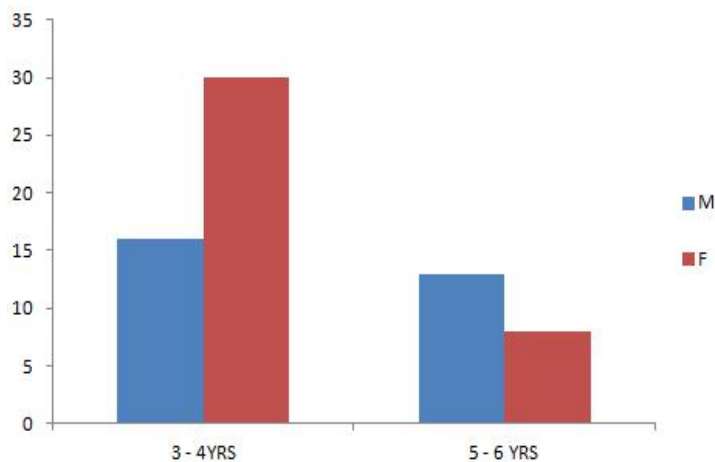
Catriona. M and Geoffrey. B (2010) studied age of acquisition, aging in verb production. Normal young and old adults were shown pictured or written verbs and asked to name as quickly as possible. Results reveal that word frequency predicted picture-naming is seen only in older adults and they failed to make significant contribution to the word-naming. Word frequency predicted picture-naming speed only in older adults and failed to make any significant contribution to word-naming speeds for either group of participants.

Semantically Related

Examples:

- 1) Car tho adukuntunadu – car ni dobuthunadu
(playing with car) - (pushing the car)
- 2) Amma koduthundi – Thanutundi
(Mother is beating) – (Beating)
- 3) Thatha gudiki pothunadu – Thata pothunadu
(Grandfather is going to temple) – (Grandfather is going)
- 4) Babu palu taguthunadu – Babu palu tesukuntunadu
(Baby is drinking milk) – (Baby is taking milk)

Graph 3.



Semantically related verbs as the target stimuli were found in 3–4 and 5–6 year age groups. They were relatively more in 3 to 4-year age group (M-2.46%, F-4.6%) compared to 5 to 6-year age group (M-2%, F-1.2%). Boys had more number of semantically related responses compared to girls in 5 to 6-year age group. The differences were highly significant. In case of 3 to 4-year age children, we cannot draw a clear inference, because it comprised 7 boys and 18 girls. However, girls had significantly large number of semantically related responses compared to boys. This is in contradiction to 5 to 6-year age group, where boys had more number of such responses compared to girls.

Loraine K. Opler & Martin L. Albert (1991) studied verb naming in 66 healthy normal subjects (men and women – 30 to 79 years) for a period of 7 years. Results showed that there was decline in verb naming over time for the elderly group.

Hills, A.E. (2002) studied oral and written naming and comprehension of nouns and verbs in an individual, (M.M.L) with non-fluent primary progressive aphasia. Results showed that progressive deterioration of oral naming of verbs well before deterioration of written naming of nouns. The study indicates that there are distinct neural mechanisms for accessing lexical representations of nouns and verbs in language production.

Jiyeon Lee and Thompson (2015) studied phonological facilitation effects on naming effects and viewing times during noun and verb naming. In 13 agrammatic and anomic aphasia. Results reveal that a) Agrammatic"s had greater difficulty in naming of verbs than for nouns, where as for anomic aphasic"s both noun and verb were difficult to name. b) Agrammatic"s showed phonological facilitation for naming verbs, were as anomic"s showed PF for nouns only.

Semantically Unrelated:

Example: 1) Avva pulu konukutudi – Avva pulu tesukuntudi

(Grandmother is buying flowers) – (Grandmother is taking the flowers)

2) Akulu ralipotunayi – Chethu kinadapadutudi

(Leaves are falling down)–(Trees are falling)

3) Galipatam yeguravestunadu – Thega kadutunadu

(Flying the kite)–(Tighting the thread)

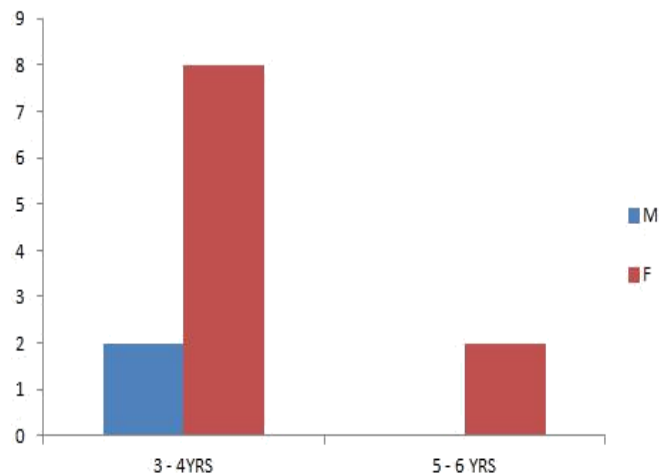
4) Amma kodutudi – Amma cheyi chupestudi

(Mother is beating) – (Mother is showing the hand)

5) Bandi naduputunadu - Bandi veltudi

(Driving the bike) – (Bike is going)

Graph 4.



Children in the present study had very large number of semantically unrelated responses for the target verbs compared to semantically related responses. Girls had significantly large number of such responses compared to boys. (M – 4%, F – 11.6%; 3 to 4 year) (M – 3.5%, F – 6.4%; 5 to 6 year) In 3 to 4-year age group, girls had more number of semantically related and unrelated responses compared to boys. But it was different in 5 to 6-year age group. In that age group, although girls had significantly larger number of semantically unrelated responses compared to boys, they had significantly less number of semantically related responses compared to boys. Semantically unrelated responses were found mostly for complex target utterances. They were in very large number for semantically related responses. The target verbs given for semantically unrelated responses were mostly complex verbs. [e.g., akulu ralipotunyi – akulu vuripotunyi, bayataku vastudi(coming out) – kurchudi(sitting), pulu konukuntudi – pulu amutudi, bandi naduputunadu – bandi potudi, candle anthestunadu(lightning the candle) – manthapetunadu(firing)]. Production of large number of semantically unrelated responses by the children in the present study reflects that they were not able to understand a significant number of verb stimuli.

Sarah E. Michael and Newman (2012) studied individuals with Down’s syndrome (DS). The authors examined verb and argument structure retrieval in 15 individuals 9 with Down’s syndrome age 11 yrs. 11months to 32yrs 10months and 9 with receptive vocabulary age matched typically developing (TD) children. Results reveal that DS performed worse than individuals with T.D in sentence grammaticality. Individual with DS omitted verbs in elicited narratives when compare with individuals with T.D. individuals with DS also omitted other necessary elements of argument structure, such as subjects, in sentences containing 2-place and 3-place verbs significantly more often than individuals with had T.D. performance was not related to working memory skills.

Verb Reversal

Example: 1) Chaduvutunadu – Rasukutunadu

(Studying) – (Writing)

3) Konukuntundi – Ammutundi

(Buying) - (Selling)

5) Agiundi – Naduputundi

(Waiting) - (Driving)

2) Natuthunnadu – Peekuthunnadu

(Planning)-(Plucking)

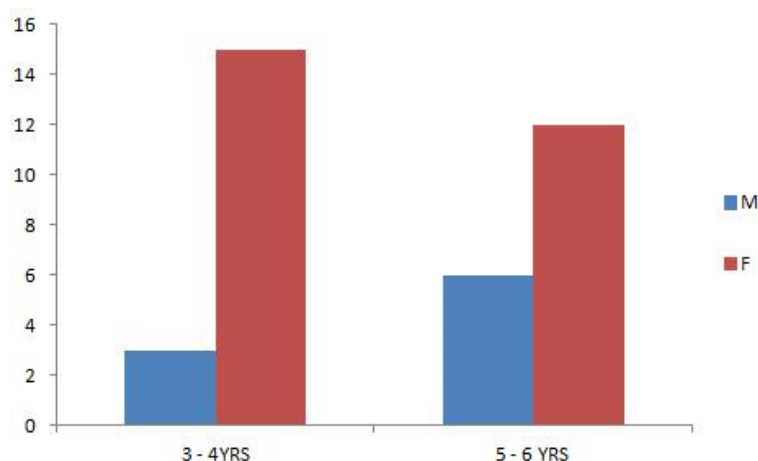
4) Tagutundi – Tintundi

(Drinking)-(Eating)

6) Antisthunnadu – Arputunnadu

(Lighting)-(Blowing Off)

Graph 5.



Verb reversals were prominently noticed in the naming of motion verbs among girls. In both the age groups, verb reversals were significantly higher among girls compared to boys. (3 to 4 years group M- 0.4%, F- 2.3% and 5 to 6 years M – 0.9%, F – 1.8%).

Verb naming starts in children during holophrastic stage, progresses through two word and telegraphic stage and develops completely at 5 years during full competence period. Verb naming of 3 – 4 and 5 – 6-year old Telugu children in present study was marked by dynamic misnaming, static misnaming, semantic related and unrelated verbs, and verb reversals. Besides these, some of the verbs were most frequent in these children's naming, whereas others were less frequent and more complex. Dynamic misnaming declined from 3 – 4 years to 5 – 6 years. Girls had few such misnaming in 5 – 6-year age group and boys had none. Static misnaming was again seen in both the age groups. However, gender differences in static misnaming were nominal (M–1.07%, F-1.3%) in 5 – 6-year age group.

In response to target picture stimuli, there was very large number of semantically unrelated responses than semantically related ones. They were more in girls than boys. Semantically unrelated responses were given for those target picture stimuli, which contained mostly complex verbs. This reflects verb reversal were found more in 3 – 4-year age group and declined in 5 – 6-year age group. However, instances of such responses were very few.

Some of the verbs like “agi vundi” and “rangulu vestundi” were hardly used by children of present study. Hence, they can be considered most complex. Children were not able to name a large number of verb stimuli. Although children had learnt almost all the verbs by 5 – 6-year age group, some verbs had not still stabilized in their speech by 6 years.

Sung. J. E. and Kwaj (2012) studied the effect of verb naming abilities depending on argument structure, in 3 groups: Group 1 (20 to 39 yrs.), Group 2 (60 to 64 yrs.), and Group 3 (above 65 yrs.). 1) Study reveals that there were significant effects for age and argument structure. 2) Group 3 i.e., above 65 yrs. had significantly worst verb naming among all groups. 3) All the participants had 3-place and 2-place verbs compare to one-place accusative verb.

Summary and conclusions

While acquiring a language, children pass through various stages of development. Thought nouns develop quite earlier during holophrastic stage (1-1.6), action words (or) verb develop slightly later. That is between 2-word stage (1^{1/2} – 2yrs), passing through telegraphic speech (2-3yrs) and coming to completion in the full competence stage (4 – 5yrs).

Development of verbs is almost complete by 5years. As action naming (or) verb naming is an important stage of language development, present investigator thought it appropriate to explore their development in Telugu speaking children, as there are very few studies on this aspect in Telugu. The present study delves deep into naming of transitive verbs. In 3 to 4 year and 5 to 6 year Telugu children, they spoke Rayalaseema dialect of Telugu. These children were from Mandal Parishad Primary School, Andhra Pradesh. Following are the major findings of the study:

1. Dynamic misnaming for transitive verbs was observed in both 3 to 4 year and 5 to 6 year age group.

2. Dynamic misnaming was observed more in 3 to 4-year old girls. But they were seen only among girls in few instances. The boys had no dynamic misnaming in 5 to 6-year age group.
3. Static misnaming, where the verbal forms are deleted and only the subject is uttered, were found more in girls in both 3 to 4 and 5 to 6-year age groups. Boys in 3 to 4-year age group had no static misnaming and static misnaming was more compared to dynamic misnaming in the current study.
4. Verb reversals were more prominently noticed among girls in both the age groups, compared to boys.
5. In 3 to 4-year age group, girls had significantly large number of object substitutions compared to boys, whereas number of such substitution decreased in 5 to 6 year age group. In this age group, there were very few object substitutions and differences between boys and girls were less significant.
6. A highly significant number of transitive verbs were semantically related to the picture stimuli.
7. There were significantly large number of semantically unrelated verbs as responses in girls and boys in both the age groups compared to semantically related verbs.
8. Padukunadu (sleeping), uguthunaru (swinging) were highly frequent verbs in 3 to 4-year age group, whereas yekkutunadu (climbing), tagutudi (drinking), yegurvestunadu (flying), adukutunadu (playing) were more frequent in 5 to 6-year age group.
9. “Agi vundi” (wating) was less frequent verb used by the children of present study. No one uttered it in 3 to 4-year age group, whereas only one 5^{1/2} year-old boy could name in the later age group. This reflects that it was most complex verb, for the children of present study.
10. Besides another verb “rangulu vestundi” (colouring) was also a complex verb in present study.

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