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Functions of Sinhala Baby Talk

Kumaranayake A.R.

Freelance Psychologist, Polgahawela, Sri Lanka, India

Abstract

Baby Talk is a special form of language used with young children but not appropriate for the use with adults. The speaker uses the baby talk whenever she subjectively perceives that the target person is less mature enough to understand the complicated linguistic features. Sinhalese baby talk is too a special register which is structurally equal to many of the baby talk registers around the world. This study aimed at understanding the range of functions employed in Sinhala baby talk, to examine whether there are any discrepancies among the commonly identified functional themes in the baby talk in other languages and Sinhala Language and to understand the weight put on each identified functions of Sinhala baby talk and reasons behind them. The participants included the mothers who are having an infant and they were asked to audio tape the baby talk utterances that they use with their babies. The researcher identified 17 baby talk functions in the existing literature and transcribed utterances were grouped in to those 17 functions by the same participant mothers. The analysis showed that the some of the baby talk functions like wining the baby's attention and teaching the baby to speak performed the primary baby talk functions while many of the baby talk functions are used with multiple objectives in order to facilitate the baby's overall course of development.

Key words: baby talk, Infant Directed Speech, Functions, motherase, Sinhalese baby talk, Parentase.

“Baby talk”, “motherase” or sometimes referred as “Parentase”, Infant Directed Speech (IDS), Child Directed Speech (CDS) is a subset of a language (Kess & Copeland), which is commonly used with babies or toddlers. Ferguson (1964) defines Baby Talk as any special form of language used with young children but not appropriate for the use with adults. My commonsense says that the speaker uses the baby talk whenever she subjectively perceives that the target person is less mature enough to understand the complicated linguistic features. Baby talk is characterized with mothers’ or caretakers’ use of soothing pitches, emotionally charged tonal modifications or adaptations, sound or word substitutions, omissions, deletions or replacements of the language that they speak to their younger ones. The idea that the baby talk or “motherase” is a universal one cannot be considered as true according to the available evidences (Dewar, 2015). The research

evidences support the idea that some societies refrain from practicing baby talk. It has been reported that such societies as Western Samoa is not practicing or encouraging practicing IDS (Harbeck, 2013). One of the notable features in the baby talk is both the baby or the toddler and the parents verbalize each other's utterances (Kutner, 2016) while picking the younger one's utterances and parent engaging in them in a repetitive manner is more common.

Functions of Baby Talk: The criterion for an adult to use the baby talk is the younger child should be a pre-linguistic one (Jones, n.d.). Jones argues that the baby talk is the initial stage of Teaching-Learning process that takes place between and adult and the younger one. This suggests that, the functional value of the baby talk have to be studied.

As we have already discussed, the ideas that Baby Talk (BT) is an initial stage of Teaching-Learning Process between Parent and the Infant is widely accepted. But while looking at the research evidences summarized above, it can be clearly seen that exchange of Teaching-Learning should involve number of other functions. If the situation is like this, we have to elucidate what are the other functions and still we don't see an agreement about the more informative analysis of other different functions of BT among the research community.

The functions of baby Talk cannot be considered as minor. These functions can vary from reduction of the complexity of linguistic structure (Jones.) to facilitating the younger one's multidimensional development as a organism with higher order thinking (Best, 2002). Further, the baby talk is characterized by modulations in prosodic aspects or changes in phonological properties. The phonetic specifications of this baby talk have been assumed to serve or fulfill the infant's communicative, affective and attentional needs (Sundberg, 1998). Sometimes, Infant Directed Speech (IDS), may perform a function of facilitating the development of attachment, where the caregiver imitates a kind of an immaturity or a baby way as Meegaskumbura suggests. (Heart, 2010 as quoted from Meegaskumbura, 1980). Similar to this idea, communicating the affect is a main function performed by baby talk. It has been discussed with attention by the researchers (Best, 2002) that melodic aspects of baby talk communicate or convey the emotions to the child while making emotions easier to be understood by the target independent of the linguistic component (Best, 2002).

It seems that this kind of attention has been captured to lesser extent in the available research and the available such research works have been limited to few of the priority functional areas of baby talk. In some situations, various nursery rhymes, performs the function of adult taking control over various behaviors of the infant, here the control over means actually the guiding of various behaviors associated with an infant's feeding, sleeping and soothing needs (Meegaskumbura, 2015) pertaining to his or her motivated behaviors.

Some research, have reported that the mothers consciously accepted that, though there are disfluencies or modifications in the natural flow of language, failure to speak in babyish way will result in problems in the natural communication with the baby (Whyatt, 1994). So

it can be said that IDS or CDS perform a facilitative function for the natural flow of the face to face communication between the caretaker and the baby.

Gaining the control over the infant's behavior serves number of different functions that varies from safeguarding the child from dangers, preparing his adjustment to biological rhythms and routing in the earth's environment and to other functions like receiving feedback to what has been communicated and emotional bonding. It is better to understand how parent employs authority through BT. Many of the researchers advocate for the idea that the communicative intent is more acceptable than the language teaching intent of baby talk (Whyatt, 1994 as quoted from brown, 1977). Holding the child's attention is also one of the aspects in this communicative function.

Though, Communicative intent and the Language familiarization intent of the baby talk help teaching Speech, only them, cannot be considered as a way of teaching children to talk. It has been widely accepted the BT performs the teaching function. (Ferguson,1977). Learning of the basic language structures involves different aspects. It can be said that the different linguistic components have been presented to young learner through different stimulus during baby talk. Though it has been given the priority to a single function of BT behind each language aspect, it is not impossible to notice that each of such aspect perform more than one function. So it is needed to understand the fact that is there only a single function or an underlying range of associated function behind linguistic aspects of BT.

Creating a Nurturing situation which may be evoked by both the baby and the parent is another function of BT m (Ferguson, 1977). A nurturing situation is where the emotional attachment as well as the attention for the other party of the conversation is maintained. The Mother or the parent's imitating the baby's immaturity may be a basic approach to draw the attention of the baby. It has been supported by the idea that most of the baby talk consist the immature speech patterns (Jones & Meakins, 2013). Because most of the baby talk is characterized by affectional messages by the parent to the baby. It serves the function of laying foundation for a emotional bond as Affection Exchange theory (AET) suggests that affectional messages enhance emotional bonding or Social Exchange (Floyed, 2006). Further, the idea that BT is a powerful "motivational booster" for babies to learn language is supported by research (Zagreb, 2016) because it captures baby's attention while communicating the positive emotionality. This is also presenting the similar side of what Ferguson has proposed. Slower rates of the language elements produced make it easier for the child to capture the linguistic cues from the adult and grasp the necessary for future learning of language. It makes the child attentive and the interaction going on (Naomi, 2013).

To teach the language to a new organism, the rapport has to be established. Baby talk being pre-linguistic may facilitate the rapport building stage of communication process. (Perhaps, for this kind of relationship the emotional and attentional functions of the Baby talk may require the modulations and modifications in the parent's language output). The examination of available literature shows that very rare attention has been paid to

understand this rapport building function of baby talk. All of these are parts of associated with the exchange of affection with the child.

Most of the old literature on baby talk (Ferguson, 1964) and recent literature on the same topic (Jones & Meakins, 2013) agree that the such functions like simplifying, clarifying and expression are promoting the language acquisition of the child or Language Socialization. As Kelker (1964) suggests, stereotyped “knowledge “of the adult about child speech can influence the way the adult uses baby talk, we can assume that some individual differences can obviously affect or effect on the baby talk of a given language. But such a phenomenon has to be extensively and objectively studied and requires careful planning. Most of the time baby talk is accompanied by the adult’s nonverbal gestures or behaviors rather than the verbal output only being presented alone. So the baby picking up the speaker’s emotions, tuning in to sounds as well as different emotional expressions and controlling and being controlled the each other’s expressions and behavior cannot be discarded as unimportant for the study of the functions of nonverbal communication of baby talk. In Ferguson (1964)’s word “Baby Talk tone may serve to give hints to the child about the grammatical structures of the utterances”.

Dissanayake (1999) brings an idea that the interactions during baby talk are indicators of a child’s imaginary representations for which the active participation of a partner is needed. Here the parent (usually the mother) is the active partner. If the argument is true, baby talk may not only serve the function of facilitating language acquisition but also, from a cognitive scientist’s viewpoint, will facilitate the foundations of entire cognitive development. Though the BT facilitates learning language, the learning process itself involves diverse aspects and this has resulted in ambiguity in the supporting ideas of BT research to above function. It is important to be clear that whether BT emphasizes more on the general aspects of language learning or tuning the baby’s neuro-cognitive structures into future acquisition of language by the Baby.

Pellegrino & Scopesi (2009), Examining he caretaker’s speech to babies in a day-care center, reported that the utterances serves the purposes of controlling and organizing the child’s behavior, empathy, conversation and teaching. In this sense, BT is associated with the functions related to a child’s overall development than the language development alone. The supportive arguments for this can be found in the reports of Miall, Dissanayaka & Hum Nat (2003) who studied about the baby talk’s contribution to communicate Aesthetic sense to the younger one.

Usually the infant is bombarded with diverse strange experiences of stimuli in his or her new environment. The concept of selective attention in psychology usually accept the idea that an infant is more likely to selectively attend to if the relative weight put on a stimulus is salient (Tummeltshammer, Mareschal, Kirkham, 2014). It may be due to this reason; most of the researchers prefer to pay attention to the idea that infant directed speech promotes infant’s attention to the language (Hirsh-Pasek, 2015). So the baby talk or IDS may be used as a salient stimulus to catch the attention of the new organism, specially conveying the

emotional messages (Dewar, 2015). This is actually the control function according to some other scholars (Naomi, 1989). But attention is not the only element in control function. Some other aspects like socializing the language, and monopolizing (getting control over the conversation between two) will also be included (Naomi, 1989). Sometimes making the baby sleepy is too way of getting control over the baby's behaviors. In that sense the idea that the baby talk is used not for the sake of babies but for the sake of parents is true (Kutner, 2016).

Some other researchers advocating for Pedagogical nature of BT, argue that adults use BT with their infants in order to make it "Babyish" by simplifying its structure and other linguistic aspects (Naomi, 1989). But it also perform some other functions like reinforcing the Persons' name (while using more nouns instead of pronouns)

Sinhala Language and Sinhala Baby Talk: Sinhala is the mother tongue of Sinhalese who consist the majority of the population in Sri Lanka. Though the children in the other communities still acquire Sinhala language it is obviously the second language in most of the cases. Average infant said to acquire Sinhala language at the age of one and half years (Heart, 2010) approximately. According to Meegaskumbura (2015), the term "Thondol" is used to synonymous with baby talk in English. The term, as he further explains, "Thondol is a diffuse word for a native speaker to give a clear definition. The frequency of baby talk is going to be lessened with the child's shift from IDS to ADS (adult directed speech) (Meegaskumbura, 2015).

It has been generally accepted that, BT is influenced by individual differences and the particular mother tongue. Sinhala language is too a rich one in the Indo-Aryan language family. It has been rarely studied the BT in Sinhala language. Specially, it is very rare or no studies available on the functions of Sinhala Baby talk. Mother tongue influences almost all the functions of baby talk. As baby talk is a prelinguistic form as well as it involves most of the non verbal aspects too, language specific variations can be there. A careful and adequate attention is needed to be paid in the current research on baby talk due to this reason.

Objectives of the study: Based on the above gaps and the inconsistencies in the available literature on Baby talk, the current research aims at,

- i. To understand the range of functions employed in Sinhala baby talk
- ii. To examine whether there are any discrepancies among the commonly identified functional themes in the baby talk in other languages and Sinhala Language.
- iii. To understand the weight put on each identified functions of Sinhala baby talk and reasons behind them.

Methodology

Participants: A group of 30 graduate and employed mothers, who is having a baby from the age 1 month to-30 months, participated in Generating Baby talk Utterances that they usually practice when they are with their babies. The mothers were between the ages 25-35

years. They were selected from two government sector departments in Sri Lanka using the purposive sampling method.

Tools: Based on the available literature on the topic, a researcher developed construct list of baby talk functions have been used to categorize audio taped baby talk utterances of participant mothers.

Procedure: This study consisted of two phases. At the first phase, all the participant mothers were asked to audio tape their natural babyish conversations with the infants for a period of three days. Each audio recording was subjected to limit its length in to 10 minutes. There were total 10-15 audio recordings from each participant. Then those audio taped conversations were transcribed into written language. The utterances ranged from 7-31 depending on the speech flow of the each audio recording.

The second phase involved the identification of Functional categories and functions of baby talk. At this stage under the phase one, the researcher developed a list of different functions of baby talk which were listed in available literature. 17 functions were identified after a careful examination of the available literature on baby talk in different contexts. Those 17 functions are given as follows:

Identified baby talk functions after an examination of the current research on the topic			
wining baby's attention	Presenting mothers' speech in a childish way	Being empathetic to the baby	Presenting the language in an expressive manner
Communicating feeling content of mother's speech	Speaking the baby in a affectionate manner	Teaching the baby to imitate	Training the language easier way to the baby
Teaching the baby to speak	Exchanging information between mother and baby	Obtaining child's corporation for the conversation	Conveying warning signals
Establishing a rapport with the baby	Gaining control over baby's behavior and actions	Maintaining the interaction	Mother adapting to child's way of behaving
Helping baby to identify/train various sounds and sound patterns			

The next stage was the one where the participant mothers who were in the actual study engaged in grouping the different utterances under the identified functions given above. There were total 300 utterances. Each participant grouped each utterance in to those 17 functions.

Results, Analysis and Discussion: It was not a surprise that the results revealed that Sinhalese baby talk performs one of the primary functions of wining baby's attention. The utterances like "Akku Ketë (milky one)", "Ran Ketë (Golden one)", "Kola Gediyo (naughty thief)" "Döni Ketë (Daughter one), Mayé Menika (My Gem), "Saththalaní (Golden one-phonetically modified)", "Kiri Duwa (Milky Daughter)", "Sudu menika (White Gem)", Rösa mal Kekula (Rose bud)" were identified by most of the mothers as performing the function of wining the younger one's attention. These words/ utterances and phonetically or into nationally modified and some of them are replaces instead of the proper words. It can be assumed that the speaker has made such changes to present the language in a different way to attract the bay's attention. It is somewhat difficult to establish the exact effect of this each of these changes on the function. But the diversity of the utterance has been capable of capturing the attention of the younger one. Further, the common utterances that the mothers make such as Sükiliyö (Candy one)", "Naththalan (Golden one-phonetically modified)", "Kukku Keté (Milky one)", "Thüti menika (tiny Gem)", "Amma (mother)", "Sudu Amma (fair mother)", "maye Deyyá (My God), "Ran kandá (Golden trunk)" were too considered as performing the same function. Also the interrogative utterances that the mothers make such as "Maye thoththu Amma Koi? (where is my kissing one?)", "Maye Sudu Amma koi? (where is my fair one?) "Sudu Ammiyá (Fair mom)", "Rösa menika Kö (Where is Rose Gem?) Are also grouped under the same function. It was possible to notice in these groupings that the Sinhalese Mothers use specific object names to draw the attention of the baby. These objects are the precious or most attractive ones in their daily life. Most probably, the mother interrogates where the baby is when the bay is actually nearby. This also performs the function of wining the younger one's attention. We could notice that the mothers were not selective while selecting the form of the utterance (affirmative/interrogative) in order to suit the function. Instead, regardless of the exact meanings of the utterances, the mother have focused on what function it performs. These findings are also in accordance with Dewar (2015) who emphasizes that baby talk is attention getting and emotion focused.

The analysis of the utterances of mothers with their babies revealed that the idea that baby talk is a pre-linguistic one even for the Sinhalese language. Most of the elements of the Sinhalese baby talk are too characterized by into national modifications, changes in other prosodic factors regardless the semantic content of the linguistic elements. This is true according to the ideas given by Jones, (n.d). One of the main objectives of this study was to identify the functions of Sinhalese baby talk other than simple teaching-learning exchanges those which are commonly discussed in existing studies.

Many researchers advocated that maintaining the baby's attention is one of the primary functions in baby talk. In accordance with such arguments given by Whyatt (1994) and Sundburg (1998), the analysis of Sinhalese baby talk reveals that this is one of the main functions performed by Baby talk. As Singh, Morgan and Best (2002) quoted from Fernald & Kuhl (1987), the idea that the function of modulating attention and arousal is performed

by baby talk is true for the Sinhalese baby talk too. So these findings are in accordance with them.

Communicating feeling content of mother's speech is necessary to develop the emotional bond between the younger one and the speaker. The groupings of the utterances revealed that many of the baby talk utterances are performing this function too. The simple sentences like "Menika Mehe Ennā (Gem Come Here)", "Sudu Ammā Enna (Fair mother come)", "Bayi Kanna Ennā (Come and eat rice-phonetically modified)", "Kukku Bonna Enna (come and drink milk)", "Mage Thoththu Amma koyi (Where is my kissing mom?) Were both the affirmative and interrogative utterances used for communicating emotions to the younger one? Most of these are the ways of addressing a baby in this culture. It can be seen that the mother has neglected the baby's need to understand the wordly meaning of her utterances but has focused on how attractively the way of addressing should be phrased in a way that it conveys the feeling associated with her way of speaking not the content of speaking. Also the single object names that the mothers use to label their younger ones are too considered as performing the function of communicating the emotional content in the mother's speech. For example, "sudu puthā (fair son), Podī (younger one), Lokū (bigger one)", "Chūti bandiya (small tummy), "Samanala patiya (Butterfly-small one)" were expected to perform such functions. Further some of the interrogative sentences and affirmative ones are too expected to perform this type of functions. The sentences like "Habun Kewada? (Did you eat?), "Rosa menika Kō (where is Rose gem?), "chuchchu kewā (Ate milk), Don Gudun Gudun (bathing), ūyiyā (paining) were too used to communicate the emotions behind what is actually said verbally. The phonetically modified verbs for different actions such as "Bayyanawa/Doyyanawa (Sleeping)", "Chilla male (Swinging) are also communicating the emotions behind the action. Further, some of the labels which are used both as an object name as well as a verb are too expected to communicate the feeling content of the mother's spoken language to the baby.

Communicating the affect is accepted as one of the impressive functions is baby talk. Singh, Morgan & Best (2002) showed that the Speaker, usually the parents shows an exaggerated indication of her affect during the bay talk making the BT easier to identify. In accordance with their idea, the results show that Sinhalese bay talk too, is successful in such type of communication as one of the functions of it. The terms such as Umma/Thoththu (Kiss), Menika (the baby-Gem), pināwa (plate) are such common usages in Sinhalese baby talk. The lovely commands like Rankote Duwana epa (don't run golden trunk), ūyi Ammata wedunā (ah, mother is hurt), bandiya ūyiyā weyi (tummy will get hurt) have been grouped by mother as those verbalizations expected to perform communication of feelings in the speech. As it was already explained, some of these were object names, verbs, and combination of verbs and nouns, ways of addressing, simple commands and simple questions with one or two word combinations. Generally the speaker (parent/ caregiver), has intentionally or unintentionally forgotten the ungrammatical changes to the language, and used combinations of interrogatives, affirmatives and negatives but focused on the function of such modifications. this shows that the melodic contours of baby talk communicates the

feeling content (specially the positive affect with prosodic features) of the mother's speech independent of the meanings as Singh, Morgan and Best (2002) suggested. Also according to Affection Exchange theory of Floyd (2006), affectionate messages enhance the relational bonds. The results of the current study show that most of the above discussed utterances function as a mean of communicating affect and love to the baby by the mother.

Most of the existing studies on the baby talk in different languages revealed that baby talk is formed to teach a baby to speak or in other words to facilitate the process of speaking the human language. Many of the utterances those were derived in this research were grouped under this function by the mothers who categorized the utterances in to functional categories. The object names like, "Köthu (Biscuit-phonetically modified "Viskothu"), ũyiyā (paining), bawwa (Dog), Happā (a dangerous creature) and even the term Kukku (milk) were identified as performing the function to teaching the baby to speak. Also the use of some other words like "bye", Amma (mom) were recognized as performing the similar function. Single object names as well as sentences of several combined phonetically modified words are too thought to use by mothers for teaching the baby to speak. Such utterances include, Pūthā (cat), Bawwā (dog), Habun Kēwada? (Did you eat?), Bandi Gediya (Stomach), Dön Gewā (fell down), Bö (water), Böm Gudun Gudun (Bathing), Paththu (Shoes) and several similar words. It seems that these new words are introduced by mother when she wants to teach new words rather than using the same existing words. Such words sometimes bear an individual specificity (Böm Gudun Gudun (Bathing)) than the common meaning that they convey in the other contexts. Sometimes, some of the utterances were exactly similar to those with adults, but the intonation was modified. For example, "Jāthi andun andada? (Did you wear nice clothes?), Maye Puthā Būm paddada? (my son, did you drive a vehicle?toy?), habun Kanna Enna (come and eat) are some of such utterances.

It seems no alternatives or severe criticisms can be generated against Ferguson's (1964) idea that the primary function of baby talk is teaching the baby to talk. As Ferguson claims, simplified way that the baby talk is presented makes it easier for the child to learn. So, the utterances and their groupings in the current study show that teaching the child to speak is the primary function even in the Sinhalese baby talk and it rejects Brown's idea that mothers do not use baby talk to teach language to the child (Whyatt, 1994).

Careful analysis of the existing research revealed that one of the functions in baby talk is establishing a rapport with the baby. Out of the utterances given by the mothers, the following were categorized into those which help to establish such relationship. For example, Maye menika (My gem), Maye thothu Amma koyi? (where is My kissing Mother?), Habun kēwada (did you eat rice?), Bandi gediya (tummy one), doni Kete (daughter one), Mage Chuti Putha bath kewada (did my small so eat rice?), Mage putha harima hondai (My son is good), Chūti Dōnota baaginida (are you hungry my daughter?), Sudu meniketa bayi mathada (are you sleepy my Daughter?), Bandiya pireнна Kēwada? (did you eat enough for the stomach?), Putha Baiyawē nedda? (Didn't you sleep son?) are some of the common utterances those are used to establish the rapport with the baby. But

many of these utterances have also been used with other functions too. It can be noticed that the speaker focus more on the way the utterances are pronounced than their actual meaning. That may be the reason for intonational modification of such utterances. This is what actually Ferguson (1964) argued as making a nurturing-baby situation during the speech. Rapport with a listener cannot be easily established unless the proper empathetic understanding is present. Fostering the social interaction is one of the results of well-established rapport. According to the above analysis, the results show that Sinhalese baby talk functions as a rapport building technique. This finding is in accordance with those of Hirsh-Pasek (2015).

Helping baby to identify or training various sounds and sound patterns are also the aspects of teaching the baby to speak. Mothers agreed that the following utterances used by them belong to the above mentioned functional category of baby talk. For example, the terms like Bawwā (dog), Kukku (milk), Happā (dangerous creature), Bandi gediya (tummy), Kukku one (need milk), Awwā one (those Needed), Būm yamu (shall go on the vehicle), āthai (desired), Uyiya (paining), Kullo kö (where are birds?), jojö (water), Hābun (rice), chuchchu (breast milk), Mage putha Būm paddada? (did my son drive the vehicle?), Api bo nāmu (shall we bathe) are the common but different utterances that are thought to use for familiarizing the sound patterns to the younger one. The above examples utterances show that Sinhalese baby talk is characterized with many of the intonational modifications of the words, duplications and replications of some of the words and adding semantically poor but prosodically rich words (like many of the given above). These results are in accordance with the ideas presented by Dewar (2015) who emphasized that research has shown that the modifications in baby talk help babies to develop some key abilities like ability to discriminate between different sounds, ability to detect boundaries between the streams of the speech and ability to distinguish between distinct classes of speech. So, Sinhalese baby talk is also not deviating from those findings.

As Herat (2010) quoted from Snow (1977), the baby talk involves simple and redundant nature of questions, imperatives, negatives with higher into national modifications, they are used to performs almost all the functions which are presented in this study.

Mother adapting to child's way of behaving, speaking the baby in an affectionate manner and presenting mothers' speech in a childish way are also found to be few of the main functions of the baby talk in most of the languages those were studied in the existing research. Almost all the utterances those were generated in the current study were categorized in to this function. So it was believed that mother adapting a childish language orientation is a primary but major function in Sinhalese baby talk. This sort of nature can even be seen in Marati baby talk as Kelkar (1964) suggests, which he identify as taking to a child as kind of a fond concession to the child's imperfections. Our analysis of the utterances reveals that even in the Sinhalese baby talk similar functional value can clearly be seen. Kelkar (1964) noted this as adult making baby "to be babied". So, Sinhalese baby talk bears the similar importance of presenting the language in a childish manner to the immature one. In other words, the speaker simplifies not only the speech output but also the

associated behavior. Jones & Meakins (2013) as quoted from Ferguson (1964) witnessed that language is clarified, simplified and expressed during baby talk in order to promote language acquisition. Going beyond their idea, the results of the current study have shown that not only the output but also the associated behaviors have undergone similar modifications.

Language involves not only the simple exchange of words but maintaining a social interaction with both speaker and the listener. This is kind of a social information exchange between two. The utterances like “Habun kewa (rice ate), Kukku öne (need milk), Doi mathayi (sleepy), Būm yamu (shall go on the vehicle), Don Gewa (fell down), Thæththa balanna (look at the cow), ūyi Ammita weduna (oh, mother is hurt), Hari baba Alluwa (ok, baby caught) are few of such utterances which are used for exchanging information with the child during this early talk. Kutner (2016), says that the purpose of the baby talk is to use it not for the sake of babies, but for the sake of ourselves. He argues that baby talk fosters social interaction between parent and the child. According to him, what will mostly matter is the emotions exchanged not the conversation. So the above discussed utterances in the Sinhalese baby talk too, foster the interaction. They also bear specific emotional associations in each utterance than the conversation itself.

Gaining control over baby’s behavior and actions is required at this age because the baby’s behavior is not independently governed nor the baby is able to self-sufficient. Almost all the mothers who grouped the mothers’ utterances with younger ones, agreed to group all of such verbalizations are performing the function of gaining control over baby’s behavior and actions.

As the baby is an immature one, Training the language easier way to the baby is required. The sentences and the words like, “Köthu (biscuit), Kukku (Milk), Uyiya (paining), Kululla (Kurulla-bird), Gnāwwā (cat), Achchī (father), Bö (water), Bayyan (rice), Doyyan (sleeping), Kakkan (banana) are used with phonetic modifications to present the child in an easier manner. Nordquist (2017) shows that reduplication of words in short form like some of those given above, “Köthu (biscuit), Bö (water), enables the babies to communicate because the words are easy to use. This is true with the idea that baby talk is Pedagogical in nature as Naomi (1989) Suggests. According to him, the words in a sentence are overrunning and overemphasizing as well as using nouns instead of pronouns. Above presented words and segments too have the same characteristics, suggesting that Sinhalese baby talk too is pedagogical in nature.

Being empathetic to the baby conveys the idea that the mother understands the baby’s mentality in the same way as she or he feels. They may include each and every aspect of the baby’s behavior. The utterances like, “Bö öne? (do you need water?), Dön gāyi! (you may fall!), Saththalan! (Golden one), Puthage Amma (baby’s (your)mother), Amma office arila enakota Puthata midi genath dennamko (mom will buy grapes for you when she returnce from work), Puthaata man godak Adareyi (mother loves you so much), Mage Wasthu Ketë (My treasure one), Ko mage sudu patiya (where is my fair Baby?), maye putha ennako

Ammi langata (my son come to your mother), Maye Putha Dinum (my son won), Maye puthata bö oneda? (my son do you need water?), Duwa Thahthā Balanna Yamuda? (Daughter, shall we go to cow?), Ambili māmā Awilla (The moon has risen), are considered as performing the function of showing empathy to the baby. What we can see is, these terms or sentences involve the lovely way of addressing or tonic modification of the word to show the empathy than the meaning of the word itself. These results are in accordance with Kess & Copeland (1984) who advocate for the idea that Baby talk is an affective one. Those it is referred only to Nootkan baby talk can be seen even in Sinhalese baby talk register. It is also in accordance with the idea of Dissanayake (2001) that baby talk is a affectional interexchange. And here some of the speaker qualities that Meegaskumbura (1984) summarized can be seen in Sinhalese baby talk. They are as he explains, Entertainer, protector, Self-entertainer and initiator. All these help the speaker to show empathy and maintain social interaction active with the baby.

As baby need to learn about everything around him teaching the baby to imitate is an important function. The mothers who categorized their own utterances were in the idea that the following utterances will perform the above function. Those include, “Bo jom kiyamu (will go for bathing), Appithaan (clapping), Handa Māmā (the moon/Uncle moon), Appithaan Gahanna (clap baby!), and Sūti puthā bö namuda? (shall be have a bath small baby?).

Obtaining child’s corporation for the conversation and maintaining the interaction are key functions in a conversation where one party of the conversation is linguistically less mature. So the following utterances have been identified to perform that function. “the utterances like, Baakkale (bicycle), Anna Abba (that is cow), Pöriyan kiyana/Jö Gudun (having a bath), Sudu meniketa bayi mathada (Are you sleepy my gem?), Haabun kewada? (Did you eat?), Ko Kuullo Doni balanna Awada? (where? Did birds come to visit you?), Godaak bayyawada? (Did you sleep much?), maye Putha bo Newada? (Did my son have a bath), Maye Puthaata Baa Ginida (are you hungry my son?), Aan Kuullo yanawa (there, birds are going) are such utterances used. This is in accordance with Ferguson’s idea of creating nurturant-baby situation or in Meegaskumbura’s words a light hearted atmosphere for the conversation. (as quoted by Meegaskumbura, 1984).

As we previously discussed, the baby’s behavior have to regulate by the caregiver and some warning signals should be communicated. According to the categorization of utterances in to functions, baby talk is made to convey some warning signals. The utterances, “Don Gayi (will fall down), Dayiyaa (will burn/ fire), Kakū Kū Kū (The leg will get dirty), Donige happo Kayi (daughter, Mosquitos will bite you), Uwa unada (are you paining?), Duwanna epa (Don’t Run) are also used for conveying warning signals to the baby. This finding supports the idea of Pellegrino& Scopesi (2009) that baby talk functions as a way of controlling and organizing the baby’s behavior.

One of the notable finding is the utterances varies significantly and diversities could be found from individual mother to mother. For the same words, two mothers used exactly

different words. For example, the term Achchi is used for grandmother by one of the respondent and is used for father by another respondent. This is in accordance with Wijeratne & Jeyaseelan (2016) who suggested that baby talk in Sri Lanka (in Sinhalese as well as Tamil is not same everywhere and varied depending on the place and the person.

Conclusions: The findings of this study provide a special insight for the functions of Sinhalese baby talk. In most of the existing studies, some of the baby talk functions were limited to the primary functions like teaching the baby to speak, wining the baby's attentions and few more. But this could pay more attention to the other marginal functions that we have already discussed. Further, though many of the baby talk functions have been somewhat discussed in the research, no effort were made to identify them in a single collective group. This study was able to gather many of those baby talk functions in to a single paper.

The functional significance of the Sinhalese baby talk and the richness of the use of such language register can be understood in the light of examining the prosodic aspects of the register rather than the language itself. Throughout the analysis of many of the utterances, it could be seen that prosodic aspects and the tonal elements of the Sinhalese baby talk played a significant role in each and every baby talk function that we discussed. Further, Sinhalese baby talk is context dependent and person (speaker) dependent. So the rich value of each function can be understood with reference o such factors.

It could be noted that except the object names which are introduced to the baby, most of the other utterances were used once for the one of the functions and again for the other functions. Many of such utterances were simultaneously performing different functions than a single function. The only exception was the object names, which fell under the category of training of introducing new words/sounds to the baby (teaching the baby to speak). So, baby talk in Sinhala language is a way to achieving many of the objectives during the course of baby's development.

Finally, though it has been found that Sinhalese baby talk serve the function of teaching the baby to speak, the exact causality can be found with the studies which evaluate the effects of Sinhalese baby talk on baby's learning in a given time period.

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