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The Acquisition of Fricatives and Affricates by Mosuli Children between 2 and 5 years

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Abstract

The present study deals with the acquisition of fricatives and affricates by Mosuli children of the age 2-5 years old. It describes the way in which these sounds are acquired by those children. So, 48 children were needed for this study. They were divided into two age groups. Each group contained 24 children. A group of pictures were presented for the children to test their pronunciations of fricatives and affricates. Their speech has been recorded and analysed. It is found that, the acquisition of these sounds was gradual and that children do not acquire fricatives and affricates at the same rate. The children used many phonological processes throughout the process of acquisition to simplify their speech, such as: assimilation, deletion and substitution. The study has shown that the earliest fricative sounds to be acquired was /f/ and /v/ followed by the palato alveolar /dʒ/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/; the alveolars /s/, /z/, /z/, /r/, the glottal /h/ and the uvular /ʁ/ with /θ/, /ð/, /ð/ and /x/ being the most difficult

Key of Mosuli Arabic Symbols(1)

A. Consonants.

/ʔ/ as in:	احمر	/ʔahmar/	"red"
/b/ as in:	باب	/ba:b/	"door"
/p/ as in:	پرده	/parda/	"curtain"
/t/ as in:	تین	/ti:n/	"fig"
/θ/ as in:	ثوم	/θu:m/	"garlic"
/dʒ/ as in:	جبل	/dʒabal/	"mountain"
/tʃ/ as in:	چای	/tʃa:j/	"tea"
/h/ as in:	حبل	/habil/	"rope"
/x/ as in:	خیاب	/xja:x/	"cucumber"
/d/ as in:	دین	/di:n/	"religion"
/ð/ as in:	ذهب	/ðahab/	"gold"
/r/ as in:	رحمة	/rahma/	"a girl's name"
/z/ as in:	زیت	/ze:t/	"oil"
/s/ as in:	سلم	/sillam/	"ladder"
/ʃ/ as in:	شریط	/ʃari:t/	"ribbon"
/ʂ/ as in:	صوصی	/ʂu:ʂi/	"chick"
/tʰ/ as in:	طیغ	/tʰe:x/	"bird"
/ð/ as in:	ظفر	/ðafar/	"a girl's name"
/ʕ/ as in:	عین	/ʕein/	"eye"
/ɣ/ as in:	غراب	/ɣra:b/	"crow"
/ʃ/ as in:	فلوس	/ʃlu:s/	"money"
/q/ as in:	قاموس	/qa:mu:s/	"dictionary"
/k/ as in:	کسی	/ki:rsi/	"chair"
/g/ as in:	کلاس	/gla:ʂ/	"glass"

/l/ as in:	ليمون	/lajmu:n/	"lemon"
/!/ as in:	لطيف	/!aṭi:f/	"a boy's name"
/m/ as in:	مكتب	/maktab /	"bureau"
/n/ as in:	ناغ	/na:ɾ/	"fire"
/h/ as in:	هدد	/hudhud/	"hoopoe"
/w/ as in:	ورق	/waraq/	"paper"
/j/ as in:	يمامة	/jamɑ:ma/	"a girl's name"

B. Vowels.

Short vowels

/i/ as in:	خبز	/xibiz/	"bread"
/a/ as in:	مكتب	/maktab/	"bureau"
/u/ as in	هدد	/hudhud/	"hoopoe"

(1)see (Zena,2003)

Long Vowels.

/i:/ as in:	دين	/di:n/	"religion"
/e:/ as in:	بيت	/be:t/	"house"
/ɑ:/ as in:	نام	/na:m/	"sleep" (for masc. sing)
/u:/ as in:	نوم	/nu:m/	"lemon"
/ɔ:/ as in:	روب	/rɔ:b/	"robe"

1. Introduction

The language acquisition of all children occurs gradually throughout interaction with people and through the environment in which they live. The environment which surrounds them is the major source of acquiring language. All children acquire their language through listening. Listening is an easy and direct way that enables them to acquire language (Hirmiz,1989:46 and Internet: 1).

Acquisition can be defined as a process of learning a particular aspect of a language and then language as a whole (Crystal, 1994: 5f). Children often begin to produce a variety of single unit utterances from the age of eighteen months (Ingram, 1976: 11; Aitchison, 1987: 12 and Yule, 1996: 179).

The acquisition of speech sounds occurs at the beginning of language learning. Children have to learn to distinguish sounds in order to acquire words and sentences (Internet: 2). From birth on, children are programmed to develop speech and language. Language development continues throughout early childhood and on into adolescence (Internet: 3).

It is difficult to be precise about the exact phonological development; and the way in which vowels and consonant are acquired varies from child to child. When a sound is mastered, it may be used only in the pronunciation of certain words and may be missing or pronounced incorrectly in others (Internet: 4). Children usually replace difficult sounds with sounds that are easier for them to articulate or they may drop difficult sounds altogether. Although sounds tend to be acquired in the same order across languages, one should keep in mind that different children may find different sounds easier or more difficult, i.e. each child will have his/her own individual learning strategies. The important thing is that there is process in their development (Internet: 5).

Children do not use language like adults because they are developing physically and cognitively and their vocal tracts are not developed yet enough. Acquiring language is a gradual, lengthy process and when children try to acquire the sounds of a language, they make errors¹. These errors are called phonological processes² (Internet: 5).

(1) These "errors" are in fact not errors at all, but a necessary part of the process of language acquisition. That is, they will disappear in time (Internet: 5).

(2) Phonological processes are patterns of sound errors that children use to simplify speech as they are learning to talk (Internet: 7)

The present study deals with the acquisition of fricatives and affricates by forty-eight Mosuli children of the age two-five years old³. It can be said that fricatives and affricates⁴ are the most difficult sounds for children to acquire, so they avoid words that begin with those sounds (Ingram, 1978: 64ff. and Internet: 6). Thus, the acquisition of sixteen sounds in different word positions, i.e. word-initial, word-medial and word-final, will be studied and analysed (see appendix: 2). They are the following: /f/ - /θ/ - /ð/ - /ð/ - /s/ - /ʃ/ - /z/ - /r/ - /ʃ/ - /x/ - /ʁ/ - /h/ - /ʁ/ - /h/ - /dʒ/ - and /tʃ/.

(3) All these children are normal and they speak the Mosuli dialect which is the dialect spoken in the city of Mosul, the second biggest city in Iraq (Sa'eed, 1998: 15 and Sa'eed, 2006: 69f.).

(4) For the description of fricatives and affricates in Mosul Arabic, see appendix: 1.

2. The Aims of the study

This paper sets out to achieve the following aims:

- 1- Describing and analysing the acquisition of Arabic fricative and affricate consonants by Mosuli children between two and five years old.
- 2- Identifying the methods of simplification used by Mosuli Arabic children at the earlier stages of fricatives and affricates acquisition
- 3- Analysing and discussing these methods or the phonological processes that occur in the speech of Mosuli Arabic children

Presenting the stages of development for fricatives and affricates acquisition by Mosuli children

3. The Procedure

The producer followed in this study is as follows:

Two groups of pictures were prepared. These pictures include words of different syllable structure and different grammatical categories. The first group includes (48) pictures. The words of the pictures for this group are all of one or two syllables.