Yarmouk University
Faculty of Arts
Department of English Language and Literature

Language Development and the Phonological Processes of Normal Jordanian Arabic-Speaking Children

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"Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of MA degree in linguistics"
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First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge my sense of gratitude to Prof. Dr. Radwan Mahadin for his guidance and insightful comments on the drafts of this paper. Special thanks are extended to my family especially my beloved dad and mum for their love and support. Also, my thanks go to the examining committee members for their suggestions that they offered to my study. Finally, special thanks go to the children who represented the sample of the study and everyone who helped me in completing my task.
Abstract

This study aims at analyzing the most frequent phonological processes in the speech of normal urban Jordanian children using Optimality Theory (OT). It also represents the stages of development that normal children go through during language acquisition.

The sample of the study consists of thirty children ages from 1.5-5 years of age. The children's pronunciations of a list of words were elicited through well known methods. For example, the children were asked to name objects like chairs and books, and they were exposed to familiar pictures. The speech of every child was tape-recorded and analyzed.

The phonological processes were divided into substitution, assimilation and syllable structure processes. After analyzing the data, it appears that the phonological processes which occur in Jordanian children's speech are the same as the phonological processes which occur in the speech of children who speak other languages. The most common substitution processes in Jordanian children's speech are de-pharyngealization, glottal replacement, de-affrication, fronting, and lateralization. The last sounds that children acquire are [r,s,d,t,dʒ and x]. Also, it appears that there is continuity between children's and adult's phonological systems. Language development is presented in the study as a reranking of constraints.
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Phonemic symbols

The following symbols are used in this study:

A. Consonants

/θ/  voiceless glottal stop
/β/  voiced bilabial stop
/η/  voiceless alveolar stop
/δ/  voiced alveolar stop
/ø/  voiced dental emphatic stop
/ι/  voiceless dental emphatic stop
/ι/  voiceless velar stop
/Θ/  voiceless interdental fricative
/Χ/  voiceless pharyngeal fricative
/χ/  voiceless uvular fricative
/r/  voiceless alveolar non-emphatic fricative
/s/  voiceless alveolar non-emphatic fricative
/s/  voiceless alveolar emphatic fricative
/γ/  voiced pharyngeal fricative
/γ/  voiced uvular fricative
/γ/  voiceless labiodental fricative
/γ/  voiceless glottal fricative
/δ/  voiced post-alveolar affricate
/γ/  voiced alveolar non-lateral liquid
/γ/  voiced alveolar lateral liquid
/γ/  voiced bilabial nasal stop
/γ/  voiced alveolar nasal stop
/γ/  voiced bilabial glide
/γ/  voiced palatal glide
/γ/  voiced velar stop
/γ/  voiced interdental fricative

B. Vowels

Short: i, a, u
Long: ii, aa, oo, ee, uu
(/a/ and /aa/ are pronounced back or front according to the adjacent segments)
Diphthongs: aj, aw