Mother-Infant Interactions:
A Linguistic Analysis

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Abstract

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This study is meant to investigate the linguistic characteristics of Jordanian motherese, i.e., the phonological, morphological, semantic, syntactic, and stylistic modifications of mothers' speech addressed to their respective infants and young children in Jordan. The study was conducted by means of tape recordings and personal observations in the families' homes during their actual and daily activities.

This thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter, a background of the study, includes two main parts: introduction to the study and literature review. The introduction talks about the historical background of the study, statement of the problem, and names and definitions of motherese. The rather extensive literature review handles the cultural and psychological perspectives of mothers' influence on child language acquisition and motherese in relation to child's age. The second chapter discusses the objectives and methodology of the study.

The third chapter investigates and analyses Jordanian mothers' speech addressed to their respective infants and young children in terms of its phonological, morphological, semantic, syntactic, and stylistic modifications and adjustments. The study uncovers interesting linguistic phenomena like sound substitution, the use of imperatives and short
questions, the extensive use of words which deal with child's immediate environment, and the use of interjections.

The last chapter, a summary and conclusion, summarizes the findings of the study and compares Jordanian motherese with its English counterpart.