A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF
DATA ON FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION:
IMPLICATIONS FOR FIRST AND SECOND LANGUAGE
EDUCATORS

MOHAMMAD MOHIDEEN OBEIDAT
B.A. (English Language). Yarmouk University
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Thesis Committee:
Dr. Ibrahim Hateamleh
Dr. Riyad Hussein
Dr. Muhammad Sabarini

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ABSTRACT

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Major Advisor : Dr. Ibrahim Hatamleh.

This study aimed at describing and analyzing the developmental process of lexical, syntactic and phonological acquisition. The description and the analysis were conducted on two and three-year-old native speakers of Jordanian Arabic. A forty-minute cassette tape was recorded for each subject every two weeks, in addition to a record of selective samples of their daily spontaneous speech.

Regarding vocabulary, the results of the study showed that most of the words acquired by the subjects were in the category of nominals. It was also shown that the next common was in the category of modifiers. From the comparison and/or contrast of this study and other related studies, it was found that there were no differences between the vocabulary items acquired by the subjects of this study and those of other subjects of different language backgrounds.
Concerning syntax, it was concluded that there were differences between the two subjects in terms of their acquisition of 24 sentence patterns except three ones. They were the following:

1- Noun + intransitive verb + prep. phrase
Example: /Taalib i'ya adasalna/ "Ta'lib came to our house".
2- Noun + transitive verb + noun.
Example: /boddo ba'TaaTah/ "I want potatoes".
3- Noun + Be (present) + verb.
Example: /layaj gasqid bawkil/ "Laith is eating".

Regarding phonology, the results showed that the two subjects uttered fricative voiceless consonants such as /f/ as in /faTbawl/ "ball", /s/ as in /sin/ "Tooth", /s/ as in /SaTlon/ "Saloon", before fricative voiced consonants such as /d/ as in /gad/ "tomorrow", /q/ as in /qaSa/ "on". It was found that nasals such as /m/ as in /maama/ "mama", and /n/ as in /naama/ "He slept", and stop consonants such as /b/ as in /baaba/ "father", /t/ as in /taqaal/ "come" and /T/ as in /Taabah/ "ball", were easily acquired by the subjects of the study.

In the light of the findings of this study, some implications were provided for language-learning authorities:

1- English language methodologists should focus on vocabulary items of equivalent categories to those acquired in the first language in the earliest stages such as nominals, and modifiers. This emphasis may be expanded to include function words.
2- Textbook authors and teachers should first introduce the linguistic units which are: first, most frequently used by equivalent native speakers of the target language; second, most simple and easy to acquire; and third, most conducive to language learning proceeding from what the learner knows to what he needs to learn.

3- Other studies should be conducted on the fifth and sixth-year-old children. Each study should focus on one category in order to describe and analyze it thoroughly. That is, one ought to focus, for example, only on vocabulary items or syntactic patterns or sounds.

4- A study should be conducted to compare first-language with second-language acquisition strategies (phonological, lexical, and syntactic) as used by first and second language speakers.

5- First and second-language teachers ought to teach the language (i.e., syntax, lexicon, phonology) which is convenient for children's age and stage. Otherwise, they need to predict the liable sources of language-learning difficulties involving the phonological, lexical, and syntactic components of language. Furthermore, they are expected to provide language learners with strategy lessons in order to overcome their problems and facilitate language learning for them. This dual purpose could be achieved when teachers' provisions fall within learners' language level and cognitive competence.