

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

There are numerous significant components to language acquisition, particularly in the case of the first language, that must be considered. One of these aspects includes the development of phonological patterns. Phonological development is the steady acquisition of speech sounds that are utilized to transmit meaning in a language (Eernisse, 2011). This process occurs in tandem with the child's development and maturation. Children learn their mother tongue in a natural process. As a result of growing up in a society where they are exposed to the language, kids can unconsciously pick up on all of the language's components (phonology, vocabulary, morphology, etc). Children learn to speak a language in the same phases as adults, according to a universal order (Velleman & Vihman, 2007).

Phonological abilities are extremely important in the acquisition of a language; in general, a kid must acquire sounds and words because they are regarded as the first steps in the process of learning and developing a language for any child of any age. When it comes to phonology, children begin to learn sounds they hear in their environment at an early age, and then they sort and collect these sounds to form words, which will subsequently be used to construct sentences.

Gradually, children learn to pronounce words in an adult-like manner. In order to survive, they must reproduce the sounds and patterns that they perceive around

them. People detect the children's attempts as being comparable to the adult models and reinforce (reward) the sounds by giving them their approval or by responding in some other desirable way to the sounds made by the children. In order to receive more of this reward, the children must repeat the sounds and patterns over and over again until they become habitual behaviors. In this way, the linguistic conduct of the children is conditioned (or 'shaped') until the habits of the youngsters are consistent with the habits of the adults (Skinner, 1975).

Arabic is a well-known language that is spoken in 22 Arab countries and is one of the most widely learned. Each country, on the other hand, has a plethora of regional dialects. As a first language, these regional spoken Arabic dialects are often acquired in early childhood, but the more formal variation known as Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is typically learned later in childhood while attending school. A variety of linguistic similarities and distinctions can be found between these variations of Arabic.

Many scholars from a variety of linguistic backgrounds have investigated the phonological acquisitions and development of children's first language, including (Dodd et al., 2003) for English language, Fox (2000) for German, Santini (1995) for Brazilian Portuguese, Zarifian & Fotuhi (2020) for Persian, Zhu (2000) for Modern Standard Chinese, Zanobini et al. (2012) for Italian ; Fitriana & Agustina (2019) for Indonesian ; Smith & Anderson (1987) for Spanish; Aalto et al. (2020) for Finnish; Ota (2016) for Japanese ; and Mowrer & Burger (1991) for Xhosa.

Furthermore, there has been various research undertaken on the Arabic language and its pronunciation. Several researchers, including Amayreh (2003); Amayreh & Dyson (1998), and Dyson & Amayreh (2000), have investigated the

acquisition of consonants in Arabic as spoken in Jordan. Ayyad et al., (2016) conducted an investigation of the acquisition criteria for singleton consonants in 4-year-old Kuwaiti Arabic-speaking children. Other research by Ammar & Morsi (2006), Saleh et al., (2007) , Abou-Elsaad et al., (2019) and Elrefaie et al., (2021) examined the early phonological development of Arabic Egyptian children between the ages of one to seven years. In addition, Ayyad (2011) and Alqattan (2015) investigated the development of phonological skills in typically developing Kuwaiti Arabic-speaking preschool-age children and laid the groundwork for the development of a speech assessment tool for Kuwaiti Arabic. Owaida (2015) conducted a study on the phonological acquisition of speech in Syrian Arabic. More specifically, the ages of speech sound acquisition and the phonological error patterns in Syrian children.

According to the information that was presented earlier, the Arabic language is spoken in a wide variety of Arab countries, each of which has its own unique characteristics. As a result, the Arabic language has many dialectical variations. The existence of such a wide variety increased the importance of conducting research on the various dialects. According to the researcher's knowledge, the dialects that have been researched and published the most frequently appear to be Egyptian, Jordanian, Saudi, Syrian, and Kuwaiti; however, there is no study related to Yemeni dialect yet.

Therefore, the researcher is very interested in writing this research to describe the phonological development and phonological processes observed in Yemeni children's native language (Sana'ani Yemeni Arabic, SA) at the age of 60-72 months as well as Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) at the age of 9-15 years old

based on the phonetic inventory acquired. Furthermore, the purpose of this research is to investigate the impact of Sana'ani Yemeni Arabic on the acquisition of Yemeni children's Modern Standard Arabic (MSA).

1.2 Research Questions

The research questions are formulated as follows:

1. How do Yemeni children at age 5-6 and at age 9-15 years old produce speech sounds while acquiring their native language (SA) and the Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)?
2. How could Sana'ani Yemeni Arabic (SA) dialect affect the acquisition of Yemeni children's Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the research questions, this study aims:

1. To explore the phonological development and phonological processes observed in Yemeni children's native language at age of 5-6 years as well as Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) at the age of 9-15 years old based on the phonetic inventory while acquiring their native language (Sana'ani Yemeni Arabic, SA) and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA).
2. To analyze the effect of Sana'ani Yemeni Arabic (SA) dialect on the acquisition of Yemeni children's Modern Standard Arabic (MSA).

1.4 The Significance of the Study

Several advantages can be gained from the current research on both a theoretical and practical level. On a theoretical level, this research is significant in that it contributes new knowledge to the subject of language acquisition, namely in the areas of phonological development in infants. This study will also serve as a

contribution for future researchers who wish to continue their research in the same field of study as the one being investigated in this study.

On a practical level, it is anticipated that this research will assist parents in developing a greater understanding and awareness of their children's needs and interests, allowing them to guide their children toward more effective and productive language learning. In addition, it is anticipated that the results will assist lecturers and educators in recognizing the significance of employing Standard Arabic when carrying out their duties.