

Literary review research paper example

[Profession](#), [Student](#)



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When Arabic speaking three year old children are introduced to English as a second language how does this affect the “ use” of both Arabic and English?

Introduction

The subject of research in this paper is Emergent Literacy Inquiry. The main objective of this paper is to explore the difficulties and challenges faced by Arabic children, when they are exposed to using both Arabic and English language together. Young children face difficulties in learning languages, when they are exposed to more than one language at their initial stages of learning to speak. They tend to get confused with the languages and suffer from improper foundation in both the languages (native language and second language). Observations has been made that, the difficulty of adapting to multilingual situations is more prevalent with Arab children. I have conducted this research by observing the behavior, attitude and

language skills of a 3 year old Arab child. Videotape has been used to study the kid for this research.

English and Arabic are two languages with a lot of significant differences. Alphabets, sounds, vowel patterns, pronunciations, word capitalization style, articles, writing style are distinctly different. English is written from left to right, while Arabic is written from right to left. People speaking the languages are culturally different to a great extent, says Shabbir and Bughio. Arab students face a lot of difficulties in learning the English language. This is mostly due to the basic structural differences of both languages. Some of the most prominent differences as indicated by the researchers are as follows.

- Arabic has no capital letters and the punctuation usage is entirely different from the English language. They say that, there is no distinction between upper and lower case alphabets. Because of this, students face problem while writing. They often forget that a sentence starts with a capital letter. They even often get confused while writing proper nouns.

- In an investigation conducted by the National Foundation of Educational Research (NFER) for spelling skills, it was found that, children often got confused with the spellings. Common confusions were grouped into 5 types: Insertion of extra letters, omission of letters, substitution of different letters, transposition of two letters and substitution of letters because of sound equivalence of words.

- Researchers explain that, it is easier to spell in Arabic because every sound has a letter, unlike the English language. Arab schools also don't conduct spelling tests for students because spelling is not a problem in Arabic. It does not have any silent alphabets in a word, on the other hand English has silent

alphabets in words and hence students often misspell words like “ half”, “ care” and “ knowledge”.

(p. 75-77)

Children from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds may face social isolation and linguistic constraints in the classroom. Particularly in an English-language classroom, the child who does not yet understand or speak English may find it difficult to interact appropriately with children and teachers because of the lack of a mutual language. This often results in the child being treated as nearly invisible, or like a baby, by other children, leading to frustration or withdrawal. Adding to their difficulties is the fact that children in this situation have very few options for communicating, except nonverbally. (p. 21) Researchers claim that children facing this kind of situation in schools are suffering by the double bind of second language learning. It is recommended to be socially accepting when around children who are trying to learn the new language. This helps the child in learning and trying to speak the new language. It is normal that children in the verge of learning multiple languages are bound to face social isolation and linguistic constraints.

Children who are competent users of their first language find it easier to learn other languages. If children intuitively understand and use the vocabulary, rules and structures of one language, they have a good foundation for acquiring a new language. Children in the early years who are learning two languages either simultaneously or sequentially are said to be ‘ emergent bilinguals’. Recent research study in the Kindergarten classrooms in Qatar indicated that many children are still in the process of establishing a

foundation of vocabulary in their first language when they enter school.

Numerous research studies have illustrated that young children who have strong vocabulary skills in preschool are more successful readers and have higher achievement than their less accomplished peers as they progress through the primary grades. Young children advance their conceptual understanding and sustain their creativity best in their first language. The addition of a second language serves to broaden children's linguistic knowledge and communication resources. Through research, linguists and early childhood experts generally agree on the following facts regarding bilingualism in children during early childhood.

- It is a widely accepted myth that children get confused when taught more than one language in their early childhood. However, the truth is that, children develop the ability to grasp more than one language. They tend to create a relation between both languages through a rhythm of their own. Researches prove that children are ready for another language starting from their early months.
- children's first language competency(for example, Arabic) has a crucial influence on cultural identity, emotional stability and conceptual development;
- competency in two languages can enrich personal growth and understanding;
- additional languages can be learned successfully at any age;
- learning a new language is most successful when learners are immersed in contexts where
- the additional language is useful/has meaning;

- The strongest indicator of successful learning of an additional language is competence in the first language and stimulating and extending the child's existing Arabic ability is important for all learning. (p. 40)

Rationale of the Research

The purpose of this study is to explore the challenges faced by a 3 year old child in managing Arabic and English language simultaneously. It is important to note that, several recent studies have revealed that, Arab children have lesser desire to learn Arabic than English. Some of the main reasons for this desire is the occurrence of diglossia (co-existence of two forms of same language) in Arabic language. Difficulty in learning the language is because the children are being introduced to a second language (in most case, English) before they have sufficient foundation in native language. In recent years Arab Government has also been allocating funds to facilitate English learning for its people. Although Arabic is an ancient language with most prestigious status among languages, it becomes important for people to learn English as a second language. Globalization, business and social situations are making learning English language a mandatory requirement.

Data Collection

Data was collected by using a video tape. Subject of study is a seven year old boy named Mohammed. He is a very outgoing and friendly child. He enjoys playing with his friends, reading books, and riding bicycle around the neighborhood. Mohammed is of average height, weight, and builds for an eight year old male. He is from Saudi Arabia and Arabic is his native

language. Mohammed is the eldest child of two siblings. He has a younger sister. When Mohammed was three years old, the family had shifted to United States. He currently lives with his family in Saint Louis, Missouri. Until Mohammed was four years old, he has been sent to a preschool. Later, was transferred to Arabic preschool, where Arabic was also taught besides English. Then at the age of five, he was admitted to an English kindergarten. Currently Mohammed is in second grade and he speaks English very well. The objective of observing Mohammed is to observe his behavior and thinking according to the research question “ When Arabic speaking three year old children is introduced to English as a second language how does this affect his “ use” of both Arabic and English?” Two observations were made for this study and were conducted at Mohammed’s home. The objective was to observe and compare the language skills of the child in both native and second language. I adopted two approaches to study Mohammed’s writing and speaking skills. These observations helped in getting a clear picture of the challenges faced by Arabic children when they get introduced to English as second language. Each observation was made in two parts, to observe how the child uses his native language and second language. Details about the observation will be discussed in this section.

First observation involved the use of colorful flash cards with pictures of animals on it. Mohammed was asked to pick one of them and explain about it. He picked the card having vampire bat and started explaining in English. “ This picture is about vampire bats. He has arms but he does not have hands and that weird, he has some long wings and some nice fur but I won’t touch it. He can grab because his legs are so sharp and he can even cut. They do

not like light when the light comes out; they go to sleep only at the night. (Short).”

He continued to explain the picture. In between, Mohammed tried to use the word ‘ search’, but was not able to recall. His explanation is as below. “ They look for animals at night because animals at the night are sleeping and he can sneak in there and let them die without talking and no one hears them and eats them until he comes to their bones and he leaves the bones until morning comes out the vampire bats go to their houses and sleep with their family.”

In the second part of observation, Mohammed was asked to explain the same picture in Arabic. First, he was asked to tell the animal’s name in Arabic, and his reply was, “ well, I do not remember his name in Arabic but I am trying to get his name in Arabic since I speak Arabic and I came from Saudi Arabia.” On constant request about explanation in Arabic, Mohammed tried to use the language.

In second observation, Mohammed was observed for his writing skills in both English and Arabic. He wrote his name correctly in both English and Arabic, following the shape of alphabets and direction of writing. Next Mohammed was asked to write the alphabets in English and Arabic.

Data Analysis

As a result, children should not learn second language until they establish their native languages first. Accordingly to this observation, I think that Mohammed cannot improve his native language without help even if he speaks Arabic at home. It is necessary for the children who are learning a second language to build a good basic structure of both languages.

According to Dakwar, the co-existence of two forms of Arabic (official and colloquial forms) makes it difficult for small children to learn it properly. The problem is that, children will be taught to use the colloquial language and before they become well versed in it, they will be exposed to official form of Arabic, which easily complicates the language learning process.

Another issue with multilingualism is the pronunciation of words. During my observation, I observed that Mohamed was not able to pronounce all words correctly or had some difficulty while saying it. This was noticed while he used both English and Arabic. Arabic has a few words that are different from the English words in sounds. Arab speakers try to speak and pronounce English words with Arabic phonetic methodology. This creates severe pronunciation problem for them. For e. g. 'stupid' becomes 'istobbid' and 'pregnant' becomes 'brignent'. This may be because; everyone who uses a language will have different cultural backgrounds and minds. Their knowledge about the language maybe inevitably different. Another most common problem with Arab students in learning the English language is with the usage of conjunctions, prepositions and articles. In English, a list of words is separated by comma; but, in Arabic, each word will be separated using a conjunction which is equivalent to 'and' in the English language. Since there are numerous prepositions in English, each preposition in Arabic can be perceived to be equivalent to more than one preposition in English. This creates a lot of confusion while these students learn English.

Second observation can be inferred as that, Mohammed was very sure about writing anything in English, whereas in Arabic, he was sure of his name but

did not know to write the alphabets correctly. He wrote them in this way:

ذ د خ ح ج ث ت ب ا

But the correct way is:

ا ب ت ث ج ح خ د ذ

Next, I asked him to write some English words such as “ go, see, love, my”

And, he wrote them correctly. After that, I asked him also to write some

Arabic words such as “ انا, احب, ذهب, كتب ” but he did not write the word

correctly because he wrote the letters separate from each other as English

words. For example, “ ك ت ب ” while in Arabic he should write most of the

letters attached to each other such as “ كتب ”.

Arabic has 28 consonants and 8 vowels. Short vowels are unimportant in

Arabic and they hardly appear in writing. Texts are read from right to left and

always written in cursive script. There is no distinction between upper and

lower case letters. Punctuation rules are not as strict as in English. These

significant differences between the language writing systems cause serious

problems in language learning process for students. It takes much longer to

read and write, compared to children from Indo-European language and

English families.

Conclusions and Recommendations

It has been observed in this research that, children who have English as

second language requires stronger foundation in their native language, in

order to use them when they grow up. Children being introduced to a second

language even before they are sure of their native languages suffer from

difficulties in using both native and second language. People with Arabic as

native language find it very difficult to adapt to English because of very significant differences in both languages. Spellings, pronunciations, sentence structures, grammatical ethics, punctuation usage are issues which pose great threat to a child's language skill. It is necessary to make sure that a child has received enough training in native language, before being introduced to second language. This can help the child in developing better language skills with the second language as well.

Further research can be done to find teaching methods to teach English to Arab children. Parents and teachers should focus on providing the children with a stimulating and encouraging environment to practice Arab language. They must be made to realize that learning Arab is not very difficult, though it has many regional dialects and co-existence of two forms. This study can be used to investigate the relationship between using Arabic and motivation on one hand and between using Arabic and promoting learning on other hand. Also the curriculum can be revised to promote and teach Arabic in a more systematic level in schools. This approach can help young children to have a good language foundation. In order to promote proficiency in both languages, they must be allowed to use the languages for communication purposes, learning to understand both formal and meaning accuracy. At cultural and social levels, campaigns can be conducted to create awareness of languages. Whether it is Arabic or English, since it is necessary to use both languages precisely, promoting the language can be done to create awareness among students and parents. They can be taught the importance of learning English as second language.

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