

The development of lexicon in Bilingual Children

Abstract:

In this study, my main focus is on the lexical development in twin toddlers being raised with two languages, Arabic and English and the factors that may influence it. The study examines to what extent the amount of exposure and language input affect the size of vocabulary acquired by two Arabic-English children. Moreover, it investigates whether the children can distinguish between Arabic and English vocabularies.

The subjects of my study are 2-year old twins who are growing up in a bilingual family who speak Arabic and English. The children were exposed to their native language, Arabic, from birth until the age of 1:8. Then, they were exposed to both Arabic and English from the age of 1:9 till now as they have been attending daycare for 10 hours per day, five days per week, where English is used. In addition, their parents use two languages with children at home; however, Arabic is used more. The data was collected through three different methods: *The observation* for two conversations between the parent and each child, *Sit-Stand Game*, and *Items-Pointing Task*.

In his study, Pearson (2007) stated the amount of exposure is one of factors affects the development of bilingualism. Moreover, David and Wei (2008) indicated 'the more balanced the child's language exposure is the more likely the child is to have cross-linguistic synonyms in his/her lexicon.'(p.g 612). They demonstrated language exposure not only affects the size of lexical items, but also it impacts the nature of the lexicon in bilingual children and parental input has a pivotal role in bilingual's lexical development influencing language dominance and vocabulary size. Through my observation, Arabic and English vocabularies were different in size overall. The number of their Arabic vocabulary was more than the number of English vocabulary because of the amount of input. Clearly, they received a huge amount of Arabic input (parental input) which leads to develop in their Arabic vocabulary size. Baum (1997) found that bilinguals develop two separate language systems where they can understand and produce utterances in both languages. During playing the game, the children demonstrated their ability to comprehend Arabic and English vocabularies. They responded to directions and requests given by following them and doing actions. They showed that they are able to understand and distinguish between both languages' vocabulary. In items-pointing task, there were differences in children's performance in both languages. Pointing to items correctly during Arabic conversation indicated that the children have already acquired the Arabic vocabulary given in the task. Taken together, the results of this study demonstrated that having received different amounts of exposure to each of their languages influenced their vocabulary size, especially in English because they have been exposed to English for four months and it is not used much at the home. Thus, it can be inferred that Arabic is the dominant language. Despite of the fact that the children received a different amount of

input in each language, they can understand and distinguish between Arabic and English vocabulary. In addition, its frequency in input has a pivotal role in the lexicon development. Thus, the results of this study are considered as evidence of findings of previous studies.

References:

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