



The Acquisition of Verb Inflections in Hijazi Arabic

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Abstract

The present study investigates the acquisition of verb inflections in the speech of 32 monolingual Hijazi Arabic-speaking children aged two to four years old. Our focus was to delineate the developmental patterns of the four major aspects of verb inflections (number, gender, person and tense) using a cross-sectional methodology combining an experimental and naturalistic data collection design. The experimental part consisted of three tasks testing comprehension of real inflected verbs, production of real inflected verbs, and production of nonce inflected verbs. The spontaneous part elicited data by using a video-clip description task and a story re-tell task. Participants were divided into four major age groups of six months intervals. Results found are consistent among the four groups with very little variation, children as young as two years old produced and comprehended verb inflections with few errors and these were often within-class substitutions rather than omissions. Results obtained were compared to those reported in other studies dealing with different languages, e.g., Italian, Spanish and Hebrew, as well as Arabic and appear to be similar.

Keywords: Hijazi Arabic, developmental pattern, experimental, naturalistic.