The Role of Tablets in the Development of a Bilingual Case in a Monolingual Society

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Abstract--- *This case study deals with the relationship between specific socio-psychological factors and the development and maintenance of two languages (Arabic and English). Especially, the study examined the influence of the constant use of tablets in the development of an American English speaking child in an Iraqi Arabic speaking family. The case then developed into a multilingual one at the age of five. The subject of the paper is a six- year old Iraqi child who was, born to, and raised by his Iraqi family. All the members of the family speak no other language than the southern Iraqi dialect. One of the researchers, the child's father, is in a constant contact with the child. He gathered his information through constant observation.*

Keywords--- *Role of Tablets, Monolingual Society, Bilingual Case.*

I. INTRODUCTION

With globalization in the twentieths and twenty first centuries, bilingualism and multilingualism have widely increased. According Pro and Cheatham (2009: 295) it is estimated that two-thirds of the worldwide population became bilinguals .Such a phenomenon has been influenced by many factors which play a significant role in supporting or impeding bilingual and biliteracy development of bilingual children.

Consequently, this case study looked at the impact of two socio-psychological factors (bilingual children's families and the internet) on the development of two languages experienced by an Iraqi bilingual child. The case study investigates how such elements influence the acquisition of English, which is now the first language to the child, and the influence of this language on his later spoken language, the Arabic in an Iraqi dialect, which is the language of his family.

Bilingualism

The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics defines bilingualism as "… a product of extensive language contact". Researchers think that bilingualism is influenced by a set of socio-psychological factors that can develop or hinder such a process (Macaro, 2005: 66). Macaro (Ibid) found out that as a result of attending classes in a heritage language school and parents' efforts, a focal Korean-English bilingual child was successfully able to develop good levels of the native language literacy even though he had been born and had live in the UK.

The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics states that bilinguals are "people who brought up in a society in which monolingualism and uniculturalism are promoted as the natural way often think that bilingualism is only for a few *special* people" (Italics is mine).

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Bois (2009: 3) states that schooling education can play an indispensable part in producing bilingual children. While Spenader (2011: 44) points out that effective schools and classrooms can be a fertile environment for those who want to develop two languages. Hence, many socio-psychological factors might play an effective part in bilingual development among children. The case that this paper deals with is different from all these views. The child investigated is at an under school age and lives in a monolingual family and has never mixed with any other society. The second reason for considering it different is that the foreign (English) language becomes the child's first language, and the language of his family (his society) is his second language.

The current study will address the following research questions:

Q1. How it happened that the child became acquainted with the tablet?

Q2. What was the role of the child's family and parents in maintaining the first language (L1) and acquiring the second language (L2)?

Q3. What other resources were available for the participant to acquire L2?

Q4. What is the child's attitude towards the two languages and what part did his attitude play in developing the two languages?

Q5. How do the structures of the first language (English) affect those of the second language (Arabic)?

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to shed light on the role of the use of computers and tablets and the role of the family in the evolution of a bilingual case in a monolingual society.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This case study was designed to investigate the effect of some of socio-psychological factors on the development and maintenance of two languages (Arabic and English). Observation is the only method used to collect data.

The Setting of Study

This study was undertaken in Ad-Diwaniya province about 180 kilometers to the south of Baghdad, Iraq. Like all the Iraqi cities and villages, all the people speak Arabic in an Iraqi dialect. The study was carried out at the home of the child which is his whole society.

Participants

The main participant is a 6-year old Iraqi child who was born and raised by his family in hometown and never mixed with any other real different society. The child got used to the computer first. He found great joy in watching the bright colors in the YouTube channels that present English songs for young babies. Gradually he began to enjoy the melodies and the words and began to move his head in a way that showed how he was carried away be the songs he used to listen to.

The child lives in a small society; his parents, and his three sisters, as illustrated in TABLE 1 below:

Table 1: Overview of the Participants

Participants			
Major Participants			
Name	Job	Age	Native language
Ali	Child	6	Now English
Minor participants			
Karim (Ali's father)	University instructor	52	Arabic
Intesar (Ali's mother)	University instructor	46	Arabic
Ghada (Ali's sister)	Medical college student	21	Arabic
Sulafa (Ali's sister)	High school student	17	Arabic
Maya (Ali's sister)	Intermediate school pupil	12	Arabic

Observations of the Participant

The researcher is in constant observation to the main participant. The researcher found out that the main participant spoke English, the latter had changed his main interest from listening to songs to watch cartoon videos and kids programs presented and acted by real people. From that time the researcher began to follow the videos the child watches trying to find out the relation between the structures of the sentences he produced and those he heard in videos.

III. FINDINGS

This section will provide a description and analysis of data obtained from the observations designed to investigate the following research questions:

Question one says: 'How it happened that the child became acquainted with the tablet?'

The child opened his eyes in a family all its members busy studying or using the computer or tablets. They scarcely talk to each other. His parents tried first to fill his time by watching kids programs on TV. Soon the father realized that these programs are dull and without benefit. So he began to make the child watch and listen to kids songs on the computer. The child appeared to be very interested, but it was difficult for him to use the mouse at the age of eleven months. So his family he wanted to watch with his finger and the video played.

Q2. What is the role of the child's family and parents in maintaining the first language (L1) and acquiring the second language (L2)?

Four members in Ali's family (his father and his three sisters) are able to speak English. To the whole family astonishment the first words that Ali uttered were in English. Trying to encourage him, his father and his sisters spoke with him in English.

Strange expressions appeared on Ali's face as he listened to his father and sisters speaking to him in English. He seemed to make a great effort listening to them. At first his father didn't understand why these strange expressions, but when the child became five years old and began to correct his father's pronunciation, the reason became clear. The strangest expressions that always appeared on Ali's face were when he heard his family talking to each other in Arabic (the language that he couldn't understand). Up to this point, Ali was unaware that people speak in a language different to that of his. He faced difficulty in communicating with his mother till he satisfied with communicating with her through signals. He never talked to guests and always tried to neglect them.

At the age of four, Ali realized that there was a language different to his language. At first he called it "Mom's language", but later he understood that it was called Arabic. From that time he began to call any language that he couldn't understand Arabic. His need to communicate with his mother motivated him to try to speak in Arabic. So every time he needed to speak with his mother about something, he came to his father or to his one of sisters and asked, "What is so and so in Arabic?" or "If you need to tell someone about so and so, how do you say it in Arabic?", then he used to try to convey the message exactly as he heard it. But usually he forgot some of the Arabic words and he found himself obliged to substitute them with English ones.

Q3. What other resources were available for the participant to acquire L2?

It does worth mentioning here that English is Ali's first language and Arabic is his second language since he spoke English first and later tried to learn Arabic. As far as question three is concerned, the greatest motivation for him to speak Arabic is to communicate with his mother whom he loves more than any other member in his family. So he tried means he could make use of to learn his mom's language. So he began to listen at his sisters as they talked to each other and also began to try to communicate in Arabic with guests and with other people when he went out with his family. At first his Arabic was funny. But he was lucky that strangers tried to listen to him and understand him without making fun of him. So his insistence on learning Arabic and trying to find sources to learn Arabic from what made him able to speak in Arabic. His sources were his mother, his family talks, and other people he met.

Question number four in this study asks: "What is the child's attitude towards the two languages and what part did his attitude play in developing the two languages?"

Ali loves English more than Arabic. He finds it easy to understand and easy to speak. He makes great effort to speak in Arabic. Even the Arabic sentences he produced were not well formed and one can hear English words inside them. He had to speak in Arabic for his mother's sake only and not for any other reason. The nice videos he watched in English made him love the language more. So his loves for English and his need to talk to his mother in Arabic both motivated him to maintain both languages. He always tries to develop his Arabic language.

Question five says: "How do the structures of the first language (English) affect those of the second language (Arabic)?"

As far as structures are concerned, the researcher found that Ali was sometimes able to produce syntactic English structures that he never heard before. Until he was five he spoke everything correctly in American English except that he until that age continued to use the regular past for all English verbs and the regular plural for nouns. But he was very ready to use the correct forms as soon as he heard them. The problem that still clear now, at the age of six, is in Arabic. He speaks Arabic in an English syntax translating word by word. He even uses the suffix (s) to pluralize Arabic nouns. The following are some of his Arabic expressions at the age of five:

(Why don't you play with me? In English) ليش ماتلعب وياي instead of ليش انت ما تلعب وي آني

(There are many plates in the kitchen. In English) هواي مواعين بالمطبخ instead of هناك كثير ماعونز في الكيتشن

(Daddy goes with you to the restaurant) بابا يروح وياك للمطعم instead of دادي يروح وي انت للرسترانت

At the age of six, Ali began to control Arabic better, but he still uses the Arabic pronouns in there detached forms which is the case in English.

IV. CONCLUSION

This short study reflects clearly that it is not necessary to be in contact with people or to live in a bilingual or multi-lingual society in order to speak more than one language. So the researcher finds it necessary to make some amendments for the definitions of bilingual people and bilingualism that are found in many books that deal with psycholinguistcs. According to this study a bilingual person is the one who is able to develop another language consciously or unconsciously by the use of any adequate source available, whether it is a machine or human.

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