

UNIVERSITY OF BENGHAZI

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***Libyan Children Learning English as a  
Second Language: a Case Study of  
Second Year Classroom at AlKhibra  
Primary School.***

by

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## Dedication

*To my parents whom are the main reason  
of what I have become today.*

## ***Acknowledgment***

***Thank God the merciful, the mercy giving at all times for making a dream come true.***

***I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Khadejah Kosarich Abuarrosh for her guidance, encouragement, friendship, and useful suggestions during the research as well as her useful books.***

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*Thanks and gratitude to the most dearest people to my heart my dad and mom, whom have been by my side since day one of my life. Their encouragement, help, support and blessing are the main reason behind any successful event throughout my lifetime.*

## **ABSTRACT**

The main objective of the present study was to investigate Libyan children acquiring English as a second language. The school under investigation was randomly chosen. The classroom where the data was collected, contained nineteen students at the age of seven and eight, eleven females and eight males.

The class was observed for nine lessons, at a period of a month and a half. Two children were chosen according to the teachers advice them being the most active in class to elicit as much feedback as possible to be observed carefully, then interviewed after each lesson to notice the progress.

The parents opinion was also elicited in the research in two ways; the mothers were interviewed, while the fathers, filled in questionnaires.

The data were analyzed interpretively in order to answer the research questions, recommendations were provided to the teachers and the learners.

The researcher reached to specific points such as the teacher's lack of attention to the children speaking and participation in class affects the acquisition, the curriculum also dealt with the language as alphabets and vocabulary only, which is not a proper way for children starting to acquire a new language.

## ملخص الدراسة

الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الدراسة هو بحث ومناقشة كيفية تعامل الأطفال الليبيين وطريقة اكتسابهم للغة الانجليزية كلغة ثانية.

المدرسة التي اجري فيها البحث اختيرت عشوائيا, جمعت المعلومات البحثية من فصل, يتكون من تسعة عشر طالب ثمانية ذكور وإحدى عشر أنثى بعمر السابعة والثامنة.

تمت مراقبة الفصل لتسع حصص لمدة شهر ونصف, وخاصة مراقبة طفلين ميريام وعلي ليكونا موضوع البحث, وتم اختيارهم على أساس نشاطهم ومشاركتهم خلال الحصة. وقد قام الباحث بإجراء مقابلة مع كل من الطفلين بعد كل حصة لملاحظة تقدمهم في اكتساب اللغة.

تم استنباط آراء الوالدين من خلال طريقتين, تم إجراء مقابلات مع الأمهات بينما الإباء يقومون بتعبئة استبيان.

قد تم تحليل البيانات للاجابة على أسئلة البحث, وتم التوصل إلى بعض التوصيات للمعلمين والطلبة.

البحث توصل إلى بعج النقاط كعدم تركيز المعلمه على تحفيز أطلبه للمشاركة والتحدث باللغة الانجليزية والذي يجثر سلبا على اكتسابهم للغة, المنهج الدراسي قدم اللغة كحروف ومفردات, الشئ الذي يعود سلبا على أطفال في بدايات اكتسابهم للغة ثانية.

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# Chapter One

## Background of the Study

### 1.0 Introduction

Second language acquisition is the acquisition of another language usually after an individual's mother tongue (first language). That is why the language learnt after that language is called a second language. It could be learnt for many reasons as for instance for economic reasons, such as to get a better job; for social reasons, such as to travel and be able to communicate freely; or for educational reasons, such as to be aware of another language and its culture. Acquiring a language is mainly the income that the children pick up naturally outside the education setting. While learning a language is consciously attending lessons to absorb that language (Klien W, 1986).

Second language acquisition is a complex process having a number of aspects. The conclusion that a number of researchers reached to is that getting older means getting smarter, and getting smarter means you are much better at learning things, memorizing, calculating, and organizing (Hakuta, 1986).

Does that include learning a second language? Theoretically, it seems convincing, but in real life it has been proven that the younger the individual is, the faster he is in soaking in the second language (Beverly, 2000).

When learning the language for educational reasons, we normally start early at school. Educationists prefer to begin early for when starting late the child's speech organs are fixed and not flexible any more, which prevents the learner from pronouncing in a proper way and not being able to achieve a native-like accent of the language. Another reason for starting young is that children have the ability to absorb that language smoothly and easily. Age is a very important factor in the learning process along with the consideration of other factors such as the setting in which the learner learns the language, the learner's personality, the effect of the first language and the learner's background .

When a child is first exposed to and acquires a language, this is considered to be his first language. When he acquires another language, while the process of acquiring the first has not yet finished, both languages are considered to be his first which is called bilingualism, this typically occurs when parents speak two different languages in the home. But if the acquisition of the first language is completed before another language is learned, this is termed second language acquisition (Lightbown and Spada, 2006).

**Klein,W stated that**

**"Thus we have three basic kinds of language acquisition: First language acquisition (FLA), second language acquisition (SLA), re-acquisition (RA), This is the first distinction which helps us to classify the phenomena."  
(1986; 3).**

**There are three basic kinds of language acquisition . First language acquisition (FLA) occurs usually when an infant has no language yet and now acquires one. If it is one language it is called monolingual FLA. The less common situation is when there are two languages acquired at the same time, also known as bilingual FLA. The second type is called second language acquisition (SLA). A second language can be acquired in a variety of ways, at any age, and for different purposes. A language can be either learned on purpose (tutored) or spontaneously (untutored) (Klein, W. 1986) .**

**A language that is tutored means that there is a teacher and a class where one goes for the purpose of learning. An untutored language is one that is elicited from everyday surroundings in a natural setting. The third type is called re-acquisition (RA). This is the case where some vocabulary or some structures are seemingly forgotten and the language is learned all over again (Klein, 1986) .**

Libyan learners now are exposed to English at a young age in school. It will be considered to be a second language in Libya since every child will learn it. It will be very well known as an official language beside Arabic. However the problem remains in how the learner will be motivated. As it is in many schools here in Libya, and indeed all over the world, the learner is directly affected by the teacher's personality and the way he/she teaches. If the learner is open enough to comprehend the information that he/she receives from the teacher, the learner probably will adopt the teachers attitude, imitating in every way he can the input such as the pronunciation, using the same methods to form a sentence and even whether or not the learner is motivated to learn, seek, and discover information.

In other words, the student in Libya faces a big dilemma as the teacher is his first and only probable source. So, whether or not that source is reliable, he is alone. In Libya a young learner does not have the opportunity of socializing or being in the presence of a native in the environment. The parents of the learner on the other hand are usually unaware of or, have no background in the second language. Sometimes they do not even care or encourage their child, when he/she come up to them proud of being able to say some words in another language.

That kind of behavior of the parents who are considered to be very influential members of any human beings life, is possibly to have a negative result preventing the learner to be motivated.

The learner, not finding the suitable atmosphere to interact within, will be confronted with a difficult problem, as the learner will not be able to use and practice the input that he/she has been receiving. Incapable of communicating with in a helpful environment which employs that second language, affects the proficiency, the improvement, and the development of that language.

Through the process of learning a language, it is very crucial for a learner to participate in the education process. In other words to practice and carry out the input that has been received earlier in order to be familiar with the language and the new vocabulary and expressions. The greater the practice, the more the learner will develop and be closer to a native speakers speech. An active student interacting in the target language in meaningful communication is more likely to acquire the language (Haynes, 2007).

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

In the past, many Libyan children were only exposed to the second language after six years of education: the school administration being fixed on the notion, that English is not a main subject, they are not used to dealing with a new or second language. Children do not take it seriously until they are forced to study the second language under the pressure of grading. Not motivated to learn it as a language, the learner is not capable of

visualizing herself actually interacting in English as a second language.

At the present time, Libyan schools offer English to their students at a much younger age: fifth grade in the public schools and as early as second grade in private schools.

Teaching English at this younger age is beneficial in terms of ease of understanding and the ability to achieve correct pronunciation. This research seeks to discover how Libyan children manage to acquire English as a second language in spite of the state of affairs in Libyan primary schools.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

In order to elicit and absorb the basis of the research it is a must to investigate the most definite and direct questions, that are required to achieve the objectives of the research and provide a clear guide line through the whole study .

**Research Question 1 : How do primary school children acquire English as a second language ?**

In other words, the researcher seeks out the methods used by the teacher, or the creative methods invented by the learners themselves ?

**The researcher intends to observe the teachers' techniques and procedures that the learners follow, in order to facilitate the progress of acquiring the language, as well as the creative methods that the students invent which sometimes come with great help as they create rules depending on repeated patterns they are exposed to.**

**Research Question 2: What are the main difficulties in acquiring English?**

**As in everything that faces us in life, there has to be obstacles and some struggle in learning an aspect being new to our minds; the researcher attempts to investigate the problems that may face a learner and attempt to elucidate those difficulties.**

**Research Question 3: What is the effect of the environment on the learners' progress in acquiring English as a second language**

**It is very important to have a healthy and a stimulating environment for learning the second language. The environment at school is the classroom; it is the location where the learner receives the input and interacts with his teacher and classmates.**



The environment at home is the parent's feedback on the output the children accomplish. Another element of the environment at home is the television, and some books that contain pictures and sometimes even a voice that pronounces letters and words. Siblings are also helpful in assisting the learner to be motivated.

**Research Question 4: How does the parent's lack of knowledge of the English language affect their child's learning of English ?**

The parents' backgrounds affect the learning process in many ways. The parents not being exposed to the English language previously may create some difficulties and delays for the children, in their journey of education, challenging them to accomplish the task of learning English as a second language.

### **1.3 Aim of the study**

The main purpose of this study is to carefully examine children who are learning English as their second language, children who have no previous background or any natural environment containing native speakers. The research also seeks to document the progress of this process.

## **1.4 Methodology**

**This research was an example of descriptive research where two learners were observed, and their behavior was analyzed. The primary school nearest in proximity to the home of the researcher was chosen for the research.**

**One second year classroom, in which children are exposed to English for the first time, was chosen randomly. Two children, a male and a female, were chosen according to the activity level of the kids. The main focus was on the two children to record the progress of acquiring the English language, but the whole class was carefully observed to remark the teacher's performance. Special emphasis on vocabulary development is the focus of this research. The children's parents were interviewed in order to collect data on the home language situation. This research discussed how two seven-to-eight-year-old children reacted and interacted with English as a second language, especially how this process developed with special focus on vocabulary.**

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature review**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

**This chapter deals with previous studies seeking out different theories and beliefs in various ways concerning the acquisition of the second language. Discussing the advantages of learning at a young age, the importance of vocabulary and how it differs from one language to another, Stages of second language learning is also mentioned, as well as the cooperative learning and second language learning, the successful learning environment, and the principles of second language learning, and finally, the factors affecting the learning process.**

#### **2.1 Advantages of learning at a young age**

**Dunn ( 2008) listed some advantages of being able to learn the language at an early age : that the mind has not reached the point where it is divided into its functional parts, thus , the learner still has plenty of spare place to receive information and be able to process it, with a clear mind and in return sends out nearly good feedback which appears to be more like a native speaker.**

Another element is that the learner acquires the language more than he consciously learns, a process that an older member would go through where he depends mainly on formal input based on grammar rules in order to construct sentences.

Dunn argued

"young children are natural language acquirers ;they are self -motivated to pick up language without conscious learning, unlike adolescents and adults. They have the ability to imitate pronunciation and work out the rules for themselves. Any idea that learning to talk in English is difficult does not occur to them unless it's suggested by adults, who themselves probably learned English academically at a later age through grammar-based text books" (2008,35).

Age is a very difficult factor to judge whether it is an advantage or not, for example, only a child at a young age can achieve a native like accent but, on the other hand an older person or adult will pick up the language faster than a child. (Scovel ,1988; Singleton,1989.)

The researcher during the research found that the learner's age being so young having no responsibilities, are open to the language with a clear mind. They also have the ability to pronounce sounds clearer than an adult.

Dunn (2008) also states that children have more time in their daily schedule to acquire a language, rather than an adult who barely has time to go to classes at a specific time with a very crowded program of the day, with a lot on the adult's mind. Young second language learners have the opportunity to pick up a language in play activities with an adult, first of all young second language learners figure out the strategy of the game, then elicits the language from the adult. Children also capture and gain without conscious knowledge the precise pronunciation because the child's tongue and vocal organs are still loose and not fixed yet on specific sounds; this advantage gives them the ability to utter any sound, pronouncing the exact and precise pronunciation.

Capturing the culture of the language is another element a young learner has the opportunity of gaining. He also judges language errors depending on his intuition. Children are still using the innate language-learning strategies to acquire their own language and they use it in acquiring their second. (McLaughlin, 1984).

McLaughlin maintained that

states that "Language represents culture, and the bilingual person is often a member of a minority group whose way of thinking and whose values are unfamiliar to the majority" (1984,7) .

This element of capturing the culture was not present in the current research as the learners had no exposure to any values of the culture.

## 2.2 Vocabulary

Grammar is the pattern of a language (Cook, 1991), and in order to fill that pattern there has to be an important component which is vocabulary. Learners acquire vocabulary in a variety of ways such as being taught word for word (a translation for each word that is learned, such as English "man" is "homme" in French). Another way is learning a list of words with their associated meanings as they are found in a dictionary. What should be looked at is the relationship between the words. In the sentence "the man lies on the bed" it should be noticed that "lies" is related to "the man" and can not be attached to any other thing, for example "tree". knowing the equivalent from one language to another is not the right strategy . A word in one language might not even have an equivalent : there is no such thing as an English "pub" in any other country (Cook, 1991) .

As explained by Cook,

" Words are not coins you change from one language to another according to a fixed exchange rate" (1991, 38).

Another method listed by Cook (1991) for learning vocabulary is to repeat a set of words at close periods of time. This method has been proven wrong since most people don't usually remember them after a while.

However, learning a set of words in a grammatical structure and being reminded of those words after a long period of time, for example thirty days, is a much more effective method.

As stated by many researchers, vocabulary is essential to understand what you are reading. In order for a child to acquire a language, he needs to be aware of the vocabulary of the language. A child that is aware of an amount of vocabulary can comprehend what he hears and reads, and that comprehension expands depending on the amount of vocabulary he controls. (Goswami, 2001 ; Metsala&Walley, 1998) .

## **2.3 Stages of Second Language Learning**

Robertson and Ford state that

"How much time, effort, and patience depends a lot on the individual who is learning , as well as the learning environment and situation, but language researchers have developed a general outline of language acquisition that helps explain the process that language learners go through to develop skills in a foreign language"

I will provide an overview to the stages of language acquisition" the six stages are the (1)Pre-production stage, (2)The early production, (3) Emergent speech, (4)Beginning fluency,(5) Intermediate fluency, and (6) Advanced fluency"(2008,4).

The first stage, of the Pre-production, the student mainly functions similarly to a sponge, the learner mostly elicits and receives information, but there is no feedback. A teacher ought to be patient at this phase as the learner stays silent. The learners prefer not to comment on the new language because first of all he/she have no confidence in themselves producing input of their own. The factor of being shy or making mistakes also slows down the process. In the current research this stage occurs to the children under observation not receiving more than producing.

During this second stage, The early production, the learner starts uttering short words and producing his/her own sentences, but the process of absorbing the language is not yet accomplished, and the learner is still processing the new language. An important element at this stage is that the learner commits a lot of mistakes and his production will be full of flaws. This stage and the following stages has not yet occurred to the children under investigation in the current research.



The third stage is Emergent speech in which the learner is more familiar the language and the usage of it, due to being exposed to more forms of the language.

This leads the learner to reach a point of forming longer sentences with more complicated vocabulary, while he heavily depends on getting meaning out of context. The amount of vocabulary is increasing and errors are decreasing especially with the repetition of interactions and use of the language.

The fourth stage is Beginning Fluency where the learner is quite fluent in everyday situations, socializing with minimum errors. When it comes to more academic contexts, however, they struggle to produce proper vocabulary, which matches the flow of the academic situation and there are gaps in vocabulary.

Intermediate Fluency , the fifth stage, is when an individual is able to communicate fluently especially in social situations and can interact in academically. Although in new situations gaps in vocabulary of knowledge will occur and errors in some unspecified expressions will also occur . The level of errors is minimizing quickly, and the learner is able to express mature language forms with skills in second language such as offering, suggesting, and analyzing a problem.

The learner at the final stage, Advanced Fluency, is capable of communicating fluently in the second language in various ways, and in different situations, whether they are social or academic areas, as well as interacting successfully in new contexts. While the learner's accent affects his speech. He will at this stage face some trouble in using idiomatic expressions correctly. Although he is completely comfortable in creating a conversation.

Ritchie, W.C (1978) has tried to figure out the length of time that it takes a second language learner to go through the stages, and to actually master the language, which depends on the individual himself and how he acquires the language, whether the learner's first language skills are strong to determine how smoothly he/she acquires the second language. Five to seven years is the period that an advanced fluency learner would take to achieve acquisition of the second language. Seven to ten years is the period for slow learners and to reach advanced fluency, a basic thing is the learner's unique background which eventually affects the second language.

## **2.4 Cooperative Learning and Second Language Learning**

According to Xiaoping, Mohan, and Early (1998), a commonly held belief in the field of second language education is that cooperative learning maximizes second language acquisition by providing opportunities for both language input and output.

An early study was carried out by Long, Adams, Mclean and Castanos(1976) where a teacher in a classroom of ESL learners at intermediate level, attempted to investigate cooperative learning. The teacher divided the class into two groups, the first group had a discussion led by the teacher, while the second group was divided into groups of four where they discussed among themselves . Comparing these two groups, it was found that the amount of speech and vocabulary in pair group was greater than the teacher-led discussion. Moreover, they did not just talk more, but also produced a wider range of language functions. Comparing this research to the current research we can say that the classroom was led usually by the teacher.

Clark (2003) maintains that the way different cultures expose their children to language varies, but the outcome of first language acquisition is clear. Almost all children become fluent in their first language. This kind of guarantee is not automatic with the acquisition of second language. Second language acquisition is as complex as the acquisition of the first Language but with a wide variety of variables added in. People have the ability to learn languages throughout their lifetime, but the quality of that learning depends on many variables.

## **2.5 Successful Learning Environment**

**Haynes states that**

**"to provide a successful learning environment for English language learners, classroom teachers and administrators need to understand six essential concepts that are directly related :(1) culture shock; (2) comprehensible input and output; (3) language acquisition versus language learning; (4) the optimum age for learning a second language; (5) the affective filter; and (6) the silent period. Each of these aspects is discussed below" (2007,2)**

**Classroom culture shock Is difficult for children, and usually young students in their first grade class suffer from this shock. It is a new setting where young children are left by the parents and dropped off at school with a complete stranger (the teacher).**

**Haynes said that;**

**"Newcomers who act in the classroom are most likely suffering from culture shock. Anthropologist Kalvero Oberg first used the term "culture shock" in 1960 to describe the feelings that people have when they move to a unfamiliar culture" (2007,5).**

The child has to fully accept anything she tells him to do and elicit new information and understand it very well, above all of that, learn a completely new language, which is very difficult for a six year old.

This aspect relates to children who have lived abroad with their parents in an English-speaking country as their parents work or study there. This is not applicable to Libyan children learning second language.

The second concept teachers need to understand are Comprehensible input and output. Students do not simply acknowledge a language, they must be fully aware of the input from the teacher and the students around them. For example, when a student knows the phrase “put your book in your desk” it will not be of any trouble for him to understand “put your book on the table.”By slightly changing phrases which the student can still understand, the teacher scaffolds new information that increases the learners language comprehension. The student must then practice the input he has received; after all, comprehensible input is as important as comprehensible output.

With regard to Language acquisition and language learning, Krashen (1985) maintained that there was an important difference between the two: language acquisition is a subconscious process where the child acquires the language in a natural setting without being aware of grammar rules, but by judging what is correct and what is not, totally depending on his intuition (his feeling of what is suitable). Language learning is a conscious knowledge of the new language where it totally depends on direct instruction from the teacher. The students learn grammar rules by memorizing them.

Currently Krashen (1985) maintains that both acquisition and learning occur simultaneously, one in the class structure, the other in interactions among peers.

Haynes, (2007) attempted to formulate the optimum age for language learning when comparing students of seven and eight to teenagers and young adults, it has been found that children are capable of speaking fluently, and their pronunciation over time becomes near native. Teenagers and young adults, on the other hand are more readily able to learn the language and receive good grades but their speaking and writing skills are poor.

Although an important thing is to understand the input for language acquisition, it must be born in mind that the affective filter (emotional state) can interfere with the acquisition of the language. Some students are not able to speak or perform in front of other people, especially in initial stages of language learning. (Krashen, 1982) .

The Silent Period is the period when students do not speak much or do not speak at all. This does not mean that they are not learning, but means that they are not ready to speak and are preparing for the pre-production stage of language learning. This stage may last for days or up to a year. This period occurred to the children in the research.

Teachers should not force students by putting them on the spot and embarrassing them; this will only make matters worse. Teachers can provide students with activities that involve speaking in small groups in class. Another factor that affects the length of the silent period is the student's personality, according to whether they are shy and self-conscious or sociable and outgoing.

Children's language acquisition differs from one child to another: some children grasp the language quickly, while other children

master the same number of vocabulary at a longer period of time. Children also differ in the way they are taught, whether it is in a naturalistic setting or in a tutored setting (McLaughlin, 1984).

## **2.6 Principles of Second Language Learning**

Principles can be drawn from theory and research on second language acquisition to guide educators and help them to realize that bilingualism is a process that occurs in stages (McLaughlin, 1995).

**Principle 1:** Children who have the advantage of learning two languages, should be encouraged to keep on developing and enhancing their ability to maintain both languages while balancing the time and effort to acquire both languages.

In this way, one language will not affect the other, such as losing his first language or not doing well with the second language especially if the parents don't speak second language (Hakuta & Pease-Alvarez, 1992).

**Principle 2:** It is rare for a child to keep perfect balance of either languages, especially the first language is more used in the surrounding environment than the second language. This is very



healthy and normal; the child juggles the languages in an attempt to grasp both languages firmly (Hakuta & Pease-Alvarez, 1992).

**Principle 3:** Different use cultural patterns in language use causes conflicts for children as they are not used to some activities that were used to learn their home language at the classroom (Philips, 1972).

**Principle 4:** Children become bilingual in different ways, such as learning or being exposed to the two languages at the same time at a very young age. With the ability of using both languages evenly in their social life, another way is for a child not being able to use one of the languages more often (McClure, 1977).

**Principle 5:** Children should be encouraged to experiment with what they have just received from the second language, as they do with the first language, such as creating their own sentences whether they are correct or not. The role of the teacher here is essential to reflect on that output in mentoring to the learners the correct form of language (Mclaughlin, 1984).

Beside these principles of second language acquisition which set some basics, there are factors affecting the second language acquisition which are listed in the following paragraphs.

## **2.7 Factors Affecting Second Language Acquisition**

**There are many factors that affect the acquisition of the second language such as, the learner's age, personality, the first language could have an effect on the outcome (the second language), awareness of the learner is another factor in the acquisition of the second language.**

### **2.7.1 Age**

**It is always preferable to learn a second language at a young age; thus, learning at the age of six or seven is never too early. What happens is that the child learns the first and second language as one, the main concern of the child while acquiring the languages is not what language is, rather than discovering what this language is ( Clark, 2003 ).**

**The stages as previously mentioned in detail in 2.3{stages of second language acquisition} that a learner goes through acquiring a language. The same stages that babies go through acquiring their first language, containing similar elements such as vocabulary while a baby babbles, negation(no play), and forming a question, as (where she go?) all of these are similar attempts whether acquiring the first or second language.**

Children at the age of 6 or 7 already separate the two languages, comparing the first and second language acquisition, the process of second language acquisition is not as clear and smooth as the acquisition of the first language (Cook, 1991).

The second language is more likely learning than acquiring. Usually the second language is taught in a formal environment learning consciously which results in knowing about language.

As stated by Wells (1986) a child picks up language at an early age starting from 12 months, as he hears the surrounding environment the attempts to create his own words, then sentences. It doesn't have to be correct from the very beginning, in fact, it is not encouraging to correct the child and actually prevents the child from showing progress. The learner will eventually learn the language overtime and practice the same things occurs in second language acquisition, the environment is a major factor in this process.

### **2.7.2 Personality**

Personality is also an important factor in the learning process, it affects the development of acquiring the language and its quality depending on the learner. If the learner is shy, or sensitive to

rejection will prevent the learner to speak the language which results slow language acquisition. Children should be encouraged to get rid of any fear or embarrassment, feeling more relaxed in order to elicit more information (Larsen-Freeman,1991).

### **2.7.3 Interference of the First Language**

Krashen, etal (1982) claims that children face the interference of their first language in the form of the phonology, morphology and syntax of the first language, which influences their second language. They might find it difficult to pronounce some sounds which they are not familiar to in their own language. Their speech organs are also used to and fixed on particular positions more than others .

### **2.7.4 Awareness of the Learner**

Krashen, etal (1982) also states another element that affects the acquisition of the second language :the awareness of the learner and the learner's motivation during the process of acquiring the second language, which affects the learning process producing obstacles as the confusion of the meaning of vocabulary. Therefore, in order for a child to acquire his/her second language they ought to be consistently exposed to that language, in a proper and different context with the rightand meaningful use in order for them to function as if they were natives.

Freeman (1975) states that there are some researchers who believe that there should be an index of development for a second language learner, according to the stages that the learner has reached in his learning process. Classifying the learners as beginners ,intermediate and advanced each according to their level of acquisition. However, children learning their first language are more easily classified depending on the measure of the linguistic competence of their sentences as calculating their mean length of utterance.

Obviously such a classification could not possibly be applied on a second language learner who is capable enough to produce after a short while in contact with the target language utterances more than one morpheme.

## **2.8 Language Learning and Language Teaching**

Second language learning depends mainly on what is been taught. So, mainly the learner's knowledge is living evidence on the input which the teacher delivers in the classroom.

As stated by cook,

"All successful teaching depends upon learning: there is no point in providing entertaining , lively, well-constructed, language lessons if students do not learn. The proof of the teaching is in the learning" (1991,3)

Teaching mainly depends on important elements as the teacher's technique and what it implies, the most appropriate type of students the technique is applicable for, and the classroom situation

## 2.9 Relevant Research

Hakuta (1975) conducted a longitudinal study of the acquisition of English by Uguisu, a 5-year-old native Japanese speaker. He focused his observation on relative clauses and compared Uguisu with Marta, a 5-year-old Spanish speaker learning ESL. Spanish is more like English, unlike Japanese where it places the head noun on the left of the relative clause; thus it could be predicted that Marta would produce more clauses since she

would find it similar to her own language, But that was not what Hakuta found in his research; rather to prove that they were both at the same stage of development, being 5 year-olds. However, different backgrounds create a gap in the development between two learners even if they were both at the same age. The behavior of the learner influences the learning process, and changes according to the development of the learner in the target language. Therefore, when making claims about the learner, researchers must be particularly specific about what stage of proficiency he has reached.

There is a common sense well known to many, that children are well prepared to learn a second language. They pick up the language faster and more properly than adults (Hakuta, 1986). This can be found clearly in families who have traveled abroad: while the parents struggle in conveying any message they want to say, the children cope easily and absorb the language, speaking sometimes as a native speaker.

Hakuta (1986) details the example of a five-year-old Japanese girl who lived with her parents. Her father's English could be described as "halting", but her mother studied at a university and her English was quite fluent. It was the first time for the girl to be exposed to the English language, which was quite a task for a five-year-old.

The only phrase she kept on repeating was "not in particular" a phrase she previously noticed her mother using. After that she was put in a Kindergarten where there was no formal instruction in English. She was making friends on the street, she played well and shared her toys using some phrases such as imitations from her surroundings as "I am the leader". When she was asked what the meaning of that was in Japanese she would translate it as "I am the big sister" showing that she was in charge.

After seven months she spoke fluently and no one, except a professional would know that she was not a native. Her parents had no other explanation to the remarkable development other than to the trip they had taken where they were accompanied by a native speaker. Their daughter enjoyed being with him, which made her confidence grow, and made all the previous input that she had been receiving during the seven months come out and blossom. During the next six months she mastered the language very well using it at all times, even at home with her parents although they usually responded in Japanese (Hakuta, 1986).

Concino, Rosansky, and Schumann(1973) investigated the language development of 6 subjects 2 adults, 2 adolescents, and 2 children, all of whom were Spanish native speakers, who were learning English in a non-formal instruction method. They were studied over a period of ten months; they were observed in the aspect of negation. As for Spanish the structure was to place (no) in front of the verb.

Gradually they overcome this dilemma by replacing it with a don't. The younger four subjects had no problems and smoothly absorbed the structures. The eldest adults displayed no sign of development, and went on using the (no+ verb) form. It can be concluded that the older the learner was the more difficult it was to acquire a new language, especially forms which are different in the first language. This also confirms the fact that at a younger age the individual is able to absorb a new language better.



In their research study of 1974, Dulay and Burt attempted to establish whether children of different language backgrounds acquire the target language of English in a similar manner. Their study involved 55 Chinese and 60 Spanish speakers learning English as a second language. They searched for confirmation that all children learning a second language construct the same strategies, and children with dissimilar language backgrounds such as Spanish, Japanese, Chinese, or Norwegian, make the same errors.

Children regularly approach the second language and reconstruct it in a similar creative way, in a way a native would never produce, which is referred to as the creative construction (reconstructing rules for speech they hear). ESL learners construct the same kind of rules in acquiring a second language with no relation to first language rules barring some individual difference; then the second language system guides the language process rather than the first language system.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Data Collection**

#### **3.1 Methodology**

**Descriptive research provides a description of a phenomenon, that flows naturally without the intrusion of any outside factors, such as the researcher's involvement or any experimental treatment in the whole process of the research. Descriptive research deals with formerly existing data that is investigated with a predetermined hypothesis (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989).**

**In descriptive research quantitative and qualitative elements may be present. Quantitative research might describe a specific characteristic in the second language acquisition in depth linguistically. Involves data collection procedures that result primarily in numerical data, which is then analyzed primarily by statistical methods (Seliger, & Shohamy, 1989).**

**Qualitative research involves data collection procedures that result primarily in open ended, non-numerical data which is then analyzed primarily by non-statistical methods. In the current research, the data will be analyzed in this manner.**

### **3.2 Sample**

**Sampling deals with the number of participants, and the kind of participants who will be involved in the research study. The sample size depends on the research design, whether it is quantitative or qualitative (Schensul, Lecmpete, 1999).**

**In this research, the sample consists of two subjects a male and female (Ali and Mirrium) aged eight-years-old. They were selected from a class of seventeen other students after the first observation on the basis of being the most enthusiastic students in class. As the teacher also recommended the students describing them of being active. The students were exposed to English through the curriculum that the teacher used to teach them. Although it is not provided in the manner of learning the language, the teacher's qualifications and experience does affect the learning process .**

### **3.3 Data Collection**

**Second language acquisition is a long process, which contains a great amount of detail. In this research, the major data collection tool was observation, to note the first steps two children take in the learning process. Two other tools were employed: interviews and questionnaires to collect facts and details about the progress of the case under investigation,**

### **3.3.1 Observation**

Observation is one of the data collection tools which is used extensively in educational research. It involves observing and recording what occurs in the setting of the research as the classroom. Classroom observation allows the researcher to actually see what is happening, and not rely on what the participant say they do (Schensul, Lecompete, 1999).

The classroom of nineteen students was observed by the researcher in the manner of a non-participant observer, where the researcher was not involved in the setting under investigation.

### **3.3.2 Interviews**

Interviews aim to obtain and elicit information from the perspectives of the research participant about certain issues, themes, or topics (Schensul, Lecmpete, 1999).

Directly after observing the lesson in the classroom, the two children were interviewed in order to ascertain their language development. The mothers were also interviewed on the child's behavior towards the language whether or not she is involved in this acquisition. If she is interested or not and how she reacts to

her son/daughter when they do their homework. Does she encourage her child sitting beside them and praising them. Does she attempt to learn the language knowing that she has no previous background, or does anyone else help them with their homework, such as the father or an older brother or sister? A crucial question has to be asked is what was the education of the mother: Whether she has the desire for her child to learn the language. What happens when the child speaks at English at home.

### **3.3.3 Questionnaires**

Questionnaires are instruments which provide respondents with a number of questions to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from existing answers. The second type will be conducted in this research (Schensul, Lecmpete, 1999).

The father's opinion will be elicited by the use of a questionnaire to discover how involved he is with his child's learning English. The questionnaire provided to the fathers of Ali and Mirrium appear in Appendix 2.

### **3.4 Procedures**

Several lessons were observed and two eight yearolds were observed carefully for many features, such as the way they

grasp the idea of learning a new language, and how they deal with it.

The teacher is a crucial element in the learning process; it is the source from where the child receives his input. Thus, the pronunciation of the teacher has to be perfect. The child is like a white paper; whatever is printed in his mind, whether right or wrong, is hard to erase. Not only is her knowledge important, but the way she conveys it matters too. The method that the teacher uses to impart certain information is the initial step in whether the learner will process the data or not.

The classroom was observed and monitored very carefully, for a month and a half, twice a week, with the researcher at the back of the class, where there is a clear view of the whole class, and without been visualized by any of the students, even entering the class before the students.

The researcher took notes of the process of the lesson, and the participation of the learners. The researcher took the children outside of the classroom eliciting the feedback of the learner. By recording them, asking them to read vocabulary, pointing to a number of pictures to see if the learner had the ability to match them to the correct words. The researcher asked for the

meaning of the given vocabulary, seeing if they had special techniques for memorizing the vocabulary and their way of distinguishing between them.

The focal point is intended to be in relation to vocabulary, with particular attention given to pronunciation and intonation. It is essential to focus on the sounds of the words in order to achieve the right meaning; it is well known that a slight change in the pronunciation of a letter could change the whole meaning, as for example fan/van or pin/bin and many other words.

### **3.5 The Classroom Observation**

This part of the chapter presents the data in the form of observation of two children, Mirrium and Ali, while they were in class among their classmates. Another aspect of data collection was talking to each child individually recording that output and analyzing the data. In this way, the researcher monitored throughout the process the progress if it existed. Data collected through maternal interviews and paternal questionnaires are reported at the end of this chapter, The text book used by the teacher in class can be found in Appendix 3.

This section of the research details the observation in the classroom as well as the individual interviews with the two children in the sample, Ali and Mirrium.

### **3.5.1 Week One**

#### **First Observation**

The teacher was just entering the class and the first thing she intended to do was to speak in English and say "Good morning" in a loud clear voice which, alerted the students of her entrance.

With even a louder voice they answered "Good morning teacher" with a nearly native accent due to the fact they were used to that phrase in every class, and the popularity of that certain phrase is well known to nearly everybody. The teacher then began the class by setting order in the class, speaking in English by saying "stop talking, sit down" which they did not really understand. Thus the only solution was to use body language and to point out what they had to do; for some students that did not understand what they were asked to do, they were addressed in Arabic, all of the students responded eventually.

For the next part of the lesson, the teacher asked the students to open their books in English, but also translating it in Arabic /iftahki:tabik/. She continued on speaking in Arabic, informing them to the page number and what to look at. The students were very attentive and cheerful to listen to a different language from their own, although they had no opportunity or the capability of interacting in English.



The teacher proceeded with the lesson with the Alphabet. The curriculum contained the letters of the alphabet, with each letter having three examples (three words starting with the letter given), but the teacher chose to give them only two example words for each letter. She then gave them the first three letters Aa, Bb, and Cc by writing them on the board, the capitals with the small letters, pronouncing each letter loudly and clearly.

After that she asked the students to repeat after her a couple of times and their response to each letter was pronounced correctly, the other step was to make the students to stand up and pronounce the three letters individually. Both Ali and Mirrium's reaction was very good like the rest of the class later. The students had to write the letters down in their notebooks several times.

The students are then told (in English) to open their books to provide them with vocabulary. The teacher chose two words in particular *apple*, and *arm* both starting with the first letter in the alphabet A.

The teacher kept on repeating the words in order for the students to repeat them too. Above each word there is a drawing of the word; on the first page there is a picture of an apple and an arm so they knew the meaning of each word.

Then they had the chance to write the words three times in class and had to write it several times at home as homework. The new vocabulary also included an exercise which was to match the words with the picture in order for them to grasp the meaning. The students had the opportunity to answer because of two reasons firstly, they just studied the letters still fresh in their minds and secondly, the letters and the words were still in front of them on the same page of the exercises.

The letter B was introduced with two words *Ball* and *Boy* and we come face to face with the same problem; them not knowing the other letters, and the teacher did not comment on the letters for example saying that the letter L had been previously written in the word *Apple*.

She provided them with the meaning of each word referring to the pictures provided in their books speaking in Arabic they went through the same exercise matching the words which were placed randomly, and they had to match it with the correct word. The letter C then was also provided with two words *Cat* and *Camel* the first thing that the researcher noticed was that when they were provided with the letter (C) and had words to go with the letter, the pronunciation of the letter (C) was different in the words pronounced as a /k/ and not /s/ the reaction of the

students was to just repeat what the teacher said, and not to ask why did it sounded differently.

### Ali's First Interview

Ali was the first to be interviewed. The researcher asked him to utter the first three letters of the alphabet he had just learned. This was not a difficult task for him and he pronounced them very clearly in the right order. When he was asked to look at the pictures and the words under them he said *apple* very clearly without really paying attention to the actual word under the picture, due to the fact that he just had repeated the word several times. He did not concentrate on the letters of the word and how it was really formed, getting used to the mechanism of saying the word without thinking of it.

The researcher understood when asking Ali to spell the letters of the word, and he immediately answered when pointing out the first letter which was A, but when we came through the other letters he simply answered that the teacher given them the rest of the letters yet. Once he was told to concentrate and to pronounce each letter he uttered during pronouncing the word, although they were not mentioned before to him, eventually he did say each sound with the exception of the last sound E because it was a silent letter in this word.

With the other word *arm*, when pronouncing this word he pronounced the letter A as if it was a U; when asked, why he did not pronounce it properly as with the previous word, he replied that the teacher had pronounced it that way. The letters r and, m were pronounced properly. The letters that were in the word *Apple*, and *Arm* were pronounced as sounds and not letters the letter P was slightly pronounced as a B, A was the only letter which was pronounced perfectly right in the word *Apple* and not in the word *Arm*, but pronounced as /erm/.

When Ali was asked about the letters following the first letter in both words he only recognized the second letter A. The letter C was also displayed with two words *cat* and *camel* Ali here pronounced the word *cat* well, but had a problem with the second word which he found long and containing two vowels

especially the second vowel confusing it with the sound /i:/ . Who had to write each word three times and then do the exercise which was also matching the pictures with the new words.

### **Mirrium's First Interview**

Mirrium was then asked to pronounce the three letters, which was not a problem, but when it came to the words it was difficult. Due to her repeating them over and over, she memorized the words but she did not know which word was which. So, at first

when the researcher pointed to the picture and the word *Apple* she said *arm*, not knowing the rest of the letters of the words and since both of the words started with an A there was no big difference between the two words according to her. She knew the meaning of each word with the pictures clarifying that, but she was really confused about the written words, due to repeating the words over and over again with not really going through the word letter by letter, she also was pronouncing the A in Arm as U.

For the words that started with the letter B, Mirrium had a kind of problem with the diphthong vowel in the word *boy*, and when she said the word *ball* it sounded more like *bowl*.

Eventually when differentiating the sound of each letter she had no problem in pronouncing the words; due to her age and her speech organs which are not fixed yet, when extensive exercise is carried on the correct pronunciation in the end will be achieved.

The letter C when pronounced as a /k/ in the word *cat* no questions were asked by Mirrium about the different pronunciation between the letter individually, and as it was pronounced in the word. The students including Ali and Mirrium just repeated the exact pronunciation; for the other word *camel* she pronounced it as /jamel/ in Arabic only substituting the first letter with a C instead of a J; she figured out the meaning from the picture above the word.

## **Second Observation**

**This lesson came two days after the previous lesson. The same routine of the teacher was followed: entering and greeting the students and having them reply. She then asked the students what were the three letters that they learnt during the previous class (while speaking in Arabic). The students all replied in one voice A, B, and C . When she asked them about the words only a few of them answered. Ali was one of the students that mentioned them .The teacher asked for the meaning in Arabic most of the class answered depending on the pictures.**

**Then she introduced them to the next three letters Dd, Ee, Ff writing them on the board, capital and small, asking them to repeat after her. When the letters were clear to them, she told them that they had to write them in their note books several times. While they were writing the teacher kept on checking the progress of the students and helping them.**

**When the students got used to writing the letters, she erased the board and asked if anyone could write the first letter, capital and small, picking out students that raised their hands. Having no problem in the capital version, some students were confused about the direction of the small letter d writing it as a b. The**

teacher cleared the confusion, and moved on to the next letter E which had an even bigger problem with no similarity between the capital and small letters. The letter F was the easiest of the three, due to the slight difference between the capital and small letters the children successfully wrote them on the board .

The teacher then asked the students to open their text books to look at the words presented on the board with the letters given: *dog* and *dress*, *egg* and *elephant*, and *fish* and *flower* she repeated them over and over again in order for the students to pronounce them in the right way and to help them memorize the pronunciation. With the regard to the opportunity to get used to the new vocabulary, they had the advantage of looking at the pictures and knowing the meaning of each word without the teacher telling them so.

The students wrote each word three times during the class in their books under the word and the picture. After that they went on to the exercise matching the words *dog*, and *dress* with the pictures in front of them. The words *egg*, and *elephant* were applied to a different exercise which is completing the missing letters: the first letter (g) was missing in the word egg as (e--g), and the word elephant was missing an (a) and an (e) (el—ph--nt).The words *fish* and *flower* were applied to another

kind of exercise : to choose the right word, put in to two forms as (flower\floer), (fesh\fish) and they had to pick the correct spelling.They were also told to write the words at home several times as homework .

### Ali's Second Interview

Ali was asked to pronounce the letters which was successively done but when it came to the vocabulary there was a slight hesitation due to the fact that there was more vocabulary at this stage than for the previous class. The same problem was still evident; the students not knowing the rest of the letters in the word.

The words that started with the letter D were the easiest because of the fewer amount of letters in the word, and giving the illusion of the word being easier to read, write, and memorize. For the word *egg* Ali couldn't get over the idea that although G was written twice it only had to be pronounced once in the word *egg*. The word *elephant* also posed a slight dilemma in the configuration of the two letters p, h which produced the sound /f/. These things are still new to the students- the cohesion of letters producing a new sound. The teacher did not explain this aspect of the /f/ phoneme. In the interviews with Ail and Mirrium, the researcher was able to work individually and explain this phenomenon outside the classroom by clearing out any confusion.



The words *fish*, and *flower* were memorized during the repetition in class after the teacher.

### **Mirrium's Second Interview**

Mirrium was interviewed next. The word *dog* was pronounced properly, and so was the other word *dress*. There was no difficulty in the word *egg* after the researcher reminded her of the right pronunciation. The word *elephant* was difficult due to the fact it being long. After the researcher said the word, she hesitated and it took her a while to gather her courage to say the word, but eventually she did say the word.

Mirrium was also confused about the different pronunciations of the letter E in the word *elephant*: its position in the beginning and in the second syllable too, one pronounced /e/ and the other /I:/. The word *fish* was a bit fun for Mirrium she knew it immediately and was eager to say it, the next word *flower* was difficult for her until I said it in front of her.

### **3.5.2 Week Two**

#### **Third Observation**

This lesson came after three days from the previous lesson. The teacher came in and the class was in chaos; she tried to put the

class in order using Arabic. English was not used at all except for the phrase "stop talking". After that she asked the class who could come up and write on the board the letter A that they had last week and pronounce it properly.

Most of the children raised their hands and were more than willing to stand up and volunteer, the rest of the letters also were quite clear too, although the students were a bit afraid and the hands were becoming less and less when it came to the last letters as E, F.

The teacher then wrote the letters from A to F on the board properly to remind them of the right form, capital and small, pronouncing them and making the children repeat after her, and she checked the student's pronunciation and their ability of memorizing the letters until this point.

The teacher then introduced three new letters which were Gg, Hh, and Ii. The teacher then wrote the letters on the board, capital and small, pronouncing them in order for the students to repeat after her, to accomplish the correct sound of the letter. Unfortunately, the teacher herself was sometimes confused between the letter G and J. She then asked for any volunteers to come to the board to pretend to be the teacher as saying the letter and the rest of the class repeats after him or her (all of that

information was said in Arabic). If the children were at any other age they would have felt some pressure, but because they were so young they handled it very well, having fun playing the role of the teacher. When one of the students spoke, the students writing on the board would say "stop talking" as they have heard the teacher previously say.

At this point the teacher told the students to open their notebooks to write the three letters, each letter several times and the teacher would check the process of the children's writing. This process took a while. Then the teacher, (speaking in Arabic) asked the students to open their textbooks and look up the page that included today's letters and the new vocabulary that went along with it.

The words were *girl*, *goat/hen*, *horse/Ice cream*, and *Insect*. The teacher said each word and its meaning referring to the picture except for the first word *girl* she actually applied it to the girls in class and referred to the other sex as *boys* a word they had previously studied. They continued looking at the picture and figuring out the meaning replying in Arabic.

They were confused about the letter I due to it's being pronounced differently in each word: first as a diphthong /ai/ and, secondly as a vowel /i/. Some of the students were

pronouncing both words with the same sound, then the teacher tells them to write each word three times under the picture.

Then they had to answer the exercise firstly, matching the words girl and goat with the right picture. secondly filling in the missing letters from the words hor--e and h—n. Finally, ticking the correct form of the words (insect\insekt, ice cream\ice creom).When the exercises were done the students had enough time to practice,the teacher told them to write the letters and words several times as homework and told them to study well for a test.

### Ali's Third Interview

When Ali was asked about the letters he was confident answering because of the repetition, but the letter G was pronounced as a J according to what he had heard from the teacher previously. The new vocabulary was reviewed and he only mentioned the word *girl* obviously because of the exercise done. When asked he also pointed out his friends whether each one was a girl or a boy.

When asked about the next word he answered in Arabic. He knew the first two letters and he needed help with the last letter forming the word *hen*. *Horse* is a difficult word for a beginner,

but Ali answered it pronouncing the letter O as a phonetic / /and he also pronounced the silent e at the end of the word.

He did say *Ice cream* due to prior knowledge of this word known very well to some people in our environment. *insect* on the other hand the first letter was pronounced as a the beginning of the word *ice cream* of course knowing the meaning of each word from the pictures.

### Mirrium's Third Interview

The three letters G,H, and I were pronounced perfectly correct by Mirrium. When it came to the vocabulary she knew the first word *girl* and for the first time she tried to put it in a sentence not grammatically perfect(I girl) but a brave attempt, considering her surroundings where there is no exercise in forming sentences.

She then pronounced the second word *goat* spelling the letters although the letter O has not been mentioned previously in the prior vocabulary. The word *hen* was no problem, with her being familiar with all of the letters. She did say *horse, ice cream, insect*, but with slight errors in the pronunciation which did not sound like a native but, perfectly clear and understandable.

The researcher tested both students: once the pictures are covered Ali knew *girl, gun, ice cream* and Mirrium recognized *girl, horse, ice cream* without any assistance.

#### Fourth Observation

The teacher once again entered the class greeting the children with "good morning" and the children responded with "good morning teacher" and one of the students stood up and walked around without permission; the teacher yelled out "desk" and the student responded very cooperatively and actually did sit down understanding the word as an order to sit down at his desk.

The teacher told the students to close their books and get their test books out, to write down the letter A and pick one word that starts with that letter either *apple* or *arm*. Ali had written the word *Arm* although the shape of the r and m are not perfectly correct but recognizable. As for Mirrium she had written the letter A well, but she had written both words wrong the r in *arm* was rotated in the opposite way and so was the word *apple* missing one of the p's and the e at the end of the word. Certain types of mistakes were repeated over and over : missing letters, letters upside down, sideways, and even substituting letters as an O instead of an a. Rarely were there errors in the first letter which had received the main focus.

After the test, the teacher introduced three new letters and new vocabulary. The teacher wrote the letters Jj, Kk, and Ll on the board in capital and small. The teacher pronounced each letter clearly in a loud voice and told the students to repeat after her (speaking in Arabic). The children repeated after her several times and then she told them to write the letters several times in their notebooks while keeping a close eye on them trying to correct any errors that the students did.

The teacher told the students to open their textbooks in order for them to find out the new vocabulary, the new words were *jug, jacket, kite, key, lion, and lemon*. The new vocabulary was easy to learn, write and to pronounce. The teacher pronounced the words and the children repeated after her, saying the meaning in Arabic and pointing to the pictures above the words.

Then it was time to write down the words in their books and complete the exercise. The exercise with the letter j was to read and match the words to the picture, the letter k was practiced in a different way filling in the missing letters as ( --ey, \ k--te) , the letter l was practiced by choosing the right form of the word as *lion\leon, and leman\lemon*. She then told them to write the letters and the words several times as homework.

### **Ali's Fourth Interview**

When asked about the letters, Ali knew which was which and pronounced them correctly, except for the letter L that was pronounced /ul/ instead of /el/. This error was due to how the teacher pronounced it.

When the textbook was opened and he had to read the new vocabulary, he was trying to spell the first word. He knew the first and the last letters, but was confused about the letter u in the middle. Once he was told, he pronounced the word *jug* freely, the word *jacket* was quite easy being very similar to the same word in Arabic. Likewise the word *lemonis* near to its equivalent in Arabic. With the word *kite* he had a problem in pronouncing the last letter, the silent e. The (io) in the word *lion* was not pronounced as the diphthong /ai/ but as a long vowel followed by an o /i:/ then /o/.

### **Mirrium's Fourth Interview**

When asked about the letters she was very happy to say them and said that all three letters have the same form in capital and small with a slight difference Jj, Kk, Ll. She also had the same mistake in pronouncing the letter L as /ul/ and not as /el/.



Moving on to the textbook where we had a look at the vocabulary, she said the word *jug* correctly, and the word *jacket* but with a slight Arabic accent, knowing that word previously in her own environment. She also pronounced the word *kite* as a totally different word *kitty* without the knowledge of that word or its meaning.

When asked why she pronounced it that way, she answered that the letter *i* was pronounced that way in the word *fish*, and pronounced the letter *e* forgetting that the teacher did not pronounce it being silent. *key* was pronounced correctly, and so was the word *lemon*, the word *lion* was pronounced the same way that Ali had pronounced it due to the mechanism of repeating after the teacher.

### 3.5.3 Week Three

#### Fifth Observation

The teacher came into class and greeted the students as usual and the students replied sounding more and more like natives since this exact phrase has been well pronounced in front of them and repeated each and every class. The teacher wrote the new letters for today which were *Mm*, *Nn*, and *Oo* in both forms pronouncing them loudly and clearly in order for the students to capture the right pronunciation.

The students proceeded to repeat after the teacher several times, followed by the procedure of writing the letters in their notebooks. The teacher informed them in Arabic as to how to go through the whole process, as usual the teacher checked each and every student to confirm that they were writing the letters properly.

The next step was for the students to open their school books on the page that their teacher explained that included today's letters M, N and O and the vocabulary that was listed, *mouse, moon/nest, nurse/orange, and owl*. The teacher repeated the words and pointed to the pictures. At this point the students did not repeat in English but, were rather concerned in translating. Whenever the teacher would say any word in English they looked at the pictures and say it in Arabic repeating after her for several times. Then the students had to write the words, each word under the picture of it in their notebooks three times.

With regard to the exercises in the textbook, they had to look at the words that started with the letter M, read and match them with the picture. The words that started with the letter N had another exercise which was filling in the missing letters as (n--st/--urse). The words that started with the letter O were written in two forms, they had to choose the right word as (oranga/orange, and Owl/awl).

The exercise was answered with the help of the teacher, but at the end of the day all the students were happy to answer. The students were told to write the letters and the words several times in their notebooks as homework.

### **Ali's Fifth Interview**

Ali was asked about the letters, if he had could read and write them. He actually did have the ability of reading and writing them in both forms capital and small. Ali also claims that he found it easy to pronounce them being quite similar the M and the N, and that the letter O was of the shape of the mouth when pronouncing it(the lips shaped as an O when saying it).

The vocabulary was becoming clearer to the students since they were recognizing more than one letter in a word. For example, Ali knew how to read and spell the word moon much better than the word *mouse*and he also easily figured out the meaning from the pictures. There was no problem in pronouncing the words *nest* and *nurse* due to repetition. The words *orange* and *owl* were pronounced correctly also.

### **Mirrium'sFifth Interview**

Mirrium was asked the same question about the letters. She answered "Of course I can say them". She said that the letter M

was the first letter of her name. She was even wearing a necklace with the letter M. She pronounced the letters and then she was asked to spell and pronounce the new words. She asked about the letter O in *mouse* and why it was pronounced as an A and written as an O. She was told that some letters are sometimes pronounced differently when put in words, but she was still confused about the situation; where some letters are pronounced differently, when occurring in different positions. She continued to say the rest of the words successfully also asking about the word *owl* having the same situation as *mouse*. She was asked what the word *orange* meant and she answered me correctly in Arabic. She was told that the word in Arabic referred to the color and the fruit, and that it had the same reference in English.

### **Sixth Observation**

The teacher came in to class greeting the children, and they also answered back " Good morning teacher". She then started to set order in class by saying very simple words and not sentences in English.

Then most of her speech was in Arabic, writing Pp, Qq, and Rron the board and saying them in a loud clear voice making them repeat after her by waving up her hand to make them raise their voices louder and louder once they were aware of the right

pronunciation, she then randomly asked each child to stand up and pronounce the three letters. She took a while in this process; the children didn't find it as easy as usual because, today's letters were very different as the place of articulation. The next step was to open their notebooks and write the three letters from the board several times, with the teacher checking the progress of the children and guiding them to the correct form of writing.

The next step was to look up the new words that start with the letters P, Q, and R in the textbook. The new vocabulary for today's letters were *pen/picture, queen/ quarter, ring/and rabbit*. The teacher read them clearly while pointing out the pictures and the students would answer in Arabic . The teacher then pronounced the first letter of each word and then the word itself for the children to repeat after her as in "P, *pen* P, *picture*/Q, *queen*, Q,*quarter*/ R, *ring*, and R , *rabbit*". This process was repeated several times and then they had to write each word three times under the picture in their books.

The next part was to do the exercise and make sure that the children were pronouncing correctly, and fully aware of the right form of writing of the new vocabulary when exposed to it. The words *pen*, and *picture* were practiced by reading the words and matching them with the pictures.

For the words that start with the letter Q the missing letters needed to be filled in as in (que--en/ qu--rter). For the letter R, the children had to choose the right form as in (ring, riug/ rabbit, rebbit). Only some of the students participated in this activity. The teacher told them to write the three letters, capital and small, and the new vocabulary several times as homework.

### Ali's Sixth Interview

Ali pronounced all three letters with a slight mispronunciation: confusing the letter P with the letter B. The researcher told him that the letter P has a sudden flow of air demonstrating with a piece of paper holding it in front of her mouth while pronouncing the letter P; he could obviously see the paper move due to the air, while there is hardly any movement with the letter B. This enabled him to distinguish between the two sounds.

When it came to pronouncing the vocabulary there was no problem with the word *Pen*, as he knew all the letters previously studied, and that the word was short. For the word *picture* Ali had a question about the whereabouts of the letter that produced the sound /tʃ/ and why the E was not pronounced at the end of the word. The other words as *queen* and *quarter*

were pronounced as the teacher pronounced them with a slight pause between the letters r and t in the word *quarter*. The words *ring* and *rabbit* were well pronounced error free. The meaning was quite clear from the pictures.

### **Mirrium's Sixth Interview**

When asked about how to pronounce the letters, Mirrium answered easily, but also facing the same problem as Ali with the confusion of the letter P with B, but when the difference was explained everything was clear.

The vocabulary was clearer now and pronounced more confidently, since she studied nearly all of the letters and she was more experienced with the letters combined together producing a whole new word. She also was confused about the sound /tf/ in the word *picture* when asked to spell the word she had no problem pronouncing the rest of the word.

### **3.5.4 Week Four**

#### **Seventh Observation**

The teacher entered the class saying "Good morning class". The class replied as usual "Good morning teacher", but the teacher came up with something new saying: "how are you doing?".

The students sat still with no reply, looking at each other wondering what was the meaning of that phrase and what to say back. The teacher then told them the translation of that phrase, and gave them the perfect answer to that question, which is "Fine, thank you". The children repeated after the teacher over and over again. The teacher then began a speaking exercise that actually activated the students and helped them practice the pronunciation of both those phrases: the teacher told each pair of children sitting next to each other, one to ask the question and the other to reply back so, the class was busy and the teacher kept supervising the whole process.

The teacher then wrote the new letters on the board in capital and small Ss, Tt, Uu and started to pronounce them loud and clear in order for the students to repeat after her. Addressing them in Arabic, the students started shouting out the letters for a couple of times, then it was time to write the letters down in their note books as told by their teacher, talking to them in Arabic except for the phrase "open your books" which was said in English. The process of writing the letters several times took a while.



The teacher then told the students to open their textbooks and look up the new vocabulary that started with the letters that had just been written on the board. The students rushed to open their textbooks to search for the new vocabulary, most of the students actually did open up to the right page. The new vocabulary was *sun, ship/ tree, tomato/ umbrella, and uncle*. The teacher began with the words that started with the letter S by saying the letter and then pronouncing the word itself as S, *sun/ S, ship*) making them repeat to get used to the sound of the word rather than understanding how it was combined; for example, the combination of the letters s and h producing the sound sh/f/. Then they had to write both words three times under the picture in their books.

The next part was to practice the memorization of the words although the vocabulary was still in front of them on the same page as the exercises.

The exercise for the letter s was matching the words. With the words written in no particular order. The pictures of the vocabulary were close to make them think of the meaning of the words. Some children did answer and were active, finding the exercise quite easy and clear.

The words that started with the letter T were also repeated for several times with the letter said at first and then the word itself over and over again. The students repeated and said the translation of the word according to the picture;above it then they had to write both words three times under the picture. There was another exercise where they had to fill in the missing letters from the vocabulary to which they were just exposed to as in(T--ee/ To--ato). Some students did answer, but the majority were just sitting still with no reaction at all. They were also told to write the vocabulary and the letters several times in their notebooks as homework.

The words *umbrella*, and *uncle* starting with the letter U were also repeated several times. The students repeated the meaning in Arabic, gaining the translation from the picture, writing it three times under it. Then it was time to do the exercise.

This time it was to tick the right form of the word, providing them with two versions as (umprella, umbrella/ uncle, unkle). Some were active and others did not participate at all. All of the students were told to write the letters and the new vocabulary in their notebooks as homework .

## **Ali's Seventh Interview**

Ali was told to pronounce the letters which was not a problem for him at all, when it came to pronouncing the words and spelling them he pronounced the word *sun*, but he could not figure out how the sound /f/ was produced in the word *ship*. The researcher explained it to him with a simple equation /S/ + /H/ = /f/, He pronounced the words *tree*, *tomato*, *umbrella*, and *uncle* with confidence being exposed to all of the letters that are included in the words until now. The meaning was clear from the pictures presenting them.

## **Mirrium's Seventh Interview**

Mirrium then was asked about the letters and how they were pronounced: she pronounced them perfectly. The words *sun*, *ship*, *tree*, *tomato*, *umbrella*, and *uncle* then were pronounced one by one in a steady voice not hesitating, but rather making sure from the researcher's reaction if she was on the right track. She didn't comment on the /f/ part but, when asked about the combination of the letters S and H producing the sound SH it was a confusion for her because of learning the word by miming and memorizing with no explanation or questions.

## **Eighth Observation**

The teacher came to the classroom saying the usual greeting with the class making the usual response. When she asked them "How are you doing?" only Ali and two other girls answered "fine, thank you". The teacher then started shouting in Arabic. "what about the rest". She then repeated the phrase and the students repeated after her a couple of times.

Asthey repeated after her she wrote on the board today's letters in capital and small Vv, Ww, and Xx and pronounced them loudly and clearly also clarifying which is the capital and which is small. She made them repeat after her several times, also noting that capital and small are identical except for the size. The teacher told the students to open their note books in English and to write the letters down several times. This process as usual took some time while the teacher observed and guided the students.

Then it was time to look at the vocabulary in their text books as told by the teacher, so all the children looked up the new vocabulary which was *vase, van/ watch, wolf/ x-Ray, X*. The teacher said each word separately from the others. starting by pronouncing the first letter of each word.

The students repeated after the teacher saying the letter and then the word and then the meaning of it in Arabic. This process was only done a few times for each word. When the teacher was sure everyone was participating, she moved on to the exercise which was matching the words with the vocabulary. The students found this exercise quite fun and easy; nearly everyone answered correctly in their schoolbooks and were raising their hands to answer.

The words *watch*, and *wolf* were repeated in the same way: the letter, the word, and then the meaning in Arabic a couple of times too. The teacher then moved to the exercises which required the students to fill in the missing letters as (wa—ch, and w—lf ). The words that started with the letter X were quite easily repeated in the same way as the previous words. Once the students were quite sure of the words, their pronunciation and meaning, it was time for the exercise which consisted of two versions of the same word and they had to choose the right form as in (X-Roy, X-Ray/ X, x) .The teacher told the students to write today's letters and vocabulary several times in their notebooks as homework.

### **Ali's Eighth Interview**

When Ali was asked about the letters, he pronounced them very well and differentiated the capital from the small easily. Then he opened his schoolbook to read the vocabulary. The words *vase*

and *van* were easily pronounced and spelt. He asked why the letter *e* was written and was not pronounced in the word *vase*. The researcher told him that it was a silent letter and some words are supposed to be learnt as they are, an answer he was not quite convinced about.

The words *watch*, and *wolf* were also pronounced well but when it came to spelling he was confused about the pronunciation of the letter *W* as a /w/ and not as it was pronounced in the alphabet. Moreover he had no idea about the combination of the letters *C* and *H* producing a different sound /t/.

The words that started with the letter *X* were the easiest he could easily read, spell and say the meaning especially with *X* which was the letter itself and not a word and had no specific meaning. Ali was asked how he remembered the answer to the teacher about how they were doing; he said that once he came back home he used the phrase with his family, saying "How are you doing?" to everyone who would listen.

### **Mirrium's Eighth Interview**

Mirrium could also pronounce the letters *V*, *W*, *X* easily and was proud of it. The words *van* and *vase* were beautifully pronounced, but when she spelt the word *vase* she said each

letter as it is and when we came to the letter S she pronounced it as /s/ and when I asked her about why she pronounced it in the word as /z/ she said she didn't know and was only learning by heart.

The words *watch* and *wolf* were pronounced well, but had the same situation with the combination of c and h and was just learning by heart. The words that started with the letter X were easy for her and she perfectly knew the meaning of all the words from the pictures. She also found the exercises very fun especially the matching. The researcher asked her why she didn't know how to answer the teachers she replied that she couldn't remember.

### 3.5.5 Week Five

#### Ninth Observation

When the teacher entered the room, there were the usual greetings. The teacher then asked them "how are you doing?" and the class responded with "fine, thank you". Gladly, Mirrium was one of them. The teacher was glad also. She then started to write on the board the last two letters of the alphabet Yy ,Zz and told the class that these are the last letters of the alphabet, speaking to them in Arabic.

The class seemed relieved. The teacher then said the letters and the students repeated after her over and over. They were then asked to open their notebooks and write the letters several times while saying them.

The teacher then made the children open their schoolbooks and look up the new vocabulary for today's letters Y, Z. The children opened on that page and were pointing to the pictures.

The teacher read the first word *Yellow* and the students shouted out all in one voice the meaning in Arabic and the teacher said well done ,but in Arabic too. When she said the word *yoyo* they all knew the meaning because in Arabic the exact word is used to refer to the same object. The teacher kept repeating the letter and then the word and the class said the letter, the word and the meaning in Arabic. This process was repeated several times. The class wrote each word three times under the pictures while the teacher observed and guided them. Afterwards they had to match the pictures to the words which was a very easy task for the students to do.

The teacher then presented the words that started with the letter Z. The first word was *Zoo*: they repeated extracting the meaning from the picture.



When the teacher said the word *Zero*, they also repeated and extracted the answer from the picture. Some were familiar with the word having been used by people in their everyday life.

The teacher pronounced the first letter and then the word itself, with the students doing the same, but including the meaning in Arabic. This continued for some time. Then they wrote each word under its picture three times. They began to do the exercise which consisted of the vocabulary they had just practiced in an exercise of missing letters; they had to fill in the correct letters as in (Z—o, Ze—o). The students had no problem at all answering the missing letters. The teacher instructed them to write all the letters and words in their notebooks several times as homework.

### **Ali's Ninth Interview**

Ali was asked to pronounce both letters and they were pronounced correctly with confidence. He then pronounced the word *yellow* and also spelt it correctly, aware of all the letters at this point. The other word *yoyo* was also pronounced right and spelt easily.

He could also say the meaning of each word. The words that started with the letters **Z** were no problem in regard to pronunciation and spelling. At this point Ali is quite ready to move on to the next level of English.

## **Mirrium's Ninth Interview**

Mirrium easily and gracefully pronounced the letters and then the words one by one along with their meaning *yellow, yoyo , zoo, zero* and with no problems at all in the pronunciation or the spelling. She also found the exercises fun and correctly answered them. Mirrium is also ready to go to the next level of English; however, she requires slightly more exercise and practice.

### **3.6 Maternal Interviews**

There were certain matters and questions that concerned both Ali and Mirrium that were discussed with their mothers in separate interviews that are found in the Appendix 1. Both children were asked to take permission from their mothers for an interview as well as providing the researcher with a phone number in order to arrange a meeting.

Ali's mother agreed to come to the school to do the interview, but Mirrium's mother could not come. So, the researcher conducted the interview in her home. The information that follows is the summary of the questions answered by both mothers.

### **3.6.1 Ali's Mother**

**Ali's mother is a house wife, and a mother of four, Ali being the second child in the family. Her education consisted of a diploma from an administration institute after high school. She was first exposed to English at preparatory at the age of thirteen years old. Her level of English was very simple. She was asked if she thought of English as a burden and too much for her child to take: she immediately denied that and said " one of the main reasons when looking for a school for my child, that it had to care and focus on the English language". She encourages Ali very much in learning English as a language and not just as a school subject.**

**She also said that it was her role in the family to teach Ali because of her husband's long hours of work .The mother doesn't know very much English only very basic things such as the letters.**

**She teaches Ali on the basis of what he tells her; when he comes home from school he opens his book and reads out the new vocabulary in order for her to teach him later. When asked what she would do if Ali had forgotten something and she couldn't read, she replied that she would ask Ali's father, on the basis of him having had a course of English, before with the very basics of English.**

Ali's mom is very keen on her son being good in English. Although she is very weak, she encourages him to use the new vocabulary such as asking him what that is if she saw a ball to make him use the word in English, and also to make him use the English word in an Arabic sentence. In terms of ranking the level of English among the family members is the father who has most the knowledge followed by Ali then the mother. Although she is very eager to learn the language, she has no time raising four children with nearly the full responsibility for family.

### 3.6.2 Mirrium's Mother

Her mother is a house wife, and mother of three, Mirrium being the first child in the family. The mother's education was carried out at an institution for computer training ; she was first exposed to the English language at the institute at seventeen years.

The English she was taught was not much but she liked the subject because of the teacher. When asked if she thought that English was a burden and too much for Mirrium to take, she said "not at all" and that she even sends her daughter to a French teacher to learn French. Mirrium likes her French teacher and enjoys the language better than she does with her English teacher.

She is also responsible for the teaching part at home. Mirriam reads to her mother what she had learned at school the first thing when she comes home. The mother then memorizes that and then observes her and guides her along. If they are both stuck they go for help to the father, although he knows how to speak Italian, but barely knows any English.

Her mother insists on her child speaking both language, a thing she always longed for herself, but didn't have the capability or the opportunity to accomplish. So, she is very proud of her daughter and encourages her to use the language as much as she possibly can.

The thing she is worried about is if she learns something wrong from the teacher she will have defectivelanguage. Another thing is that the right environment of people interacting with her is not available now andespecially when she develops the English she has afterwards .

### **3.7 Paternal Questionnaires**

The father of Ali, and the father of Mirriam were both handed a questionnaire to fill in containing questions concerning their children, and the nature of the relation between them.They

Were asked about their involvement or not, in the education of their children.

### **3.7.1 Ali's Father**

Ali's father Khaled, received an education until the first year in highschool. He was first exposed to the English language at the age of thirteen in school. English courses were offered by the company that he works for. He also stated that when he faced any obstacles, in learning English, he resorted to his aunts; who were from Denmark roots. He encourages his son occasionally, only when he has the opportunity to do so, due to his working ten hours a day.

When it comes to the acquisition of English , he sometimes helps to clarify things, but only when Ali comes asking for help, as a second option after the mother. He also considers himself better at English than his wife. When it comes to his child learning languages he said that English beside Arabic is enough, he thinks that more than one language to acquire is a burden for a child at such a young age.

### **4.7.2 Mirrium's Father**

Mirrium's father Faraj, received his education at an Engineering institute after high school. He was first exposed to English at the

age of seventeen at the institute. He had four courses at work to enable him to understand some basic every day English, and some terminology concerning his field. He praises Mirrium whenever she says any word in English to build her confidence.

The process of his daughter's acquisition of English is mainly not his role in the family, but he is there when needed, acting like "first aid" in case Mirrium faces any difficulties. He has a different opinion concerning the acquisition of languages, teaching her French as another language beside English which he believes is perfectly acceptable at her age.

## Chapter Four

### Data Analysis

The data reported in Chapter Three is analyzed in the following three sections according to Teaching Procedure, Children, and Parental Data.

#### 4.1 Analysis of the Teaching Procedure

The teacher from the very beginning tried to include all members of the class and encouraged them to speak when she greeted them in English from the first day. The class responded to her attempt very well. The teacher spoke very few words in English during the class such as "*stop talking/capital/small/open the book/stand up/sit down/desk*". At first the words were spoken in English followed directly by the Arabic translation. After the first few classes, the words and phrases were said only in English with no clarification necessary.

The phrases "*open the book/stand up/sit down*" were also understood by the body language of the teacher as waving her hand up or down or nodding or even performing the action herself such as opening the book. She sometimes referred to an order by using one word and in an unusual way the word would



be a noun, such as shouting out the word *desk* and the students would respond and sit at their desks.

This method provided the children with few vocabulary which usually was instructions repeated over and over. The first usage was followed by the translation in Arabic which the children understood, and was accompanied by obeying those orders. Thus it can be seen that repetition is a successful method that facilitates the memorization of new vocabulary, especially in context. By context here we mean the setting in which the word or phrase was used, where by allowing the second language learner to elicit the meaning from accompanying gestures, in addition to direct translation.

The teacher presented the new letters and made them repeat them several times, during the first classes, she even made children individually pronounce the letters out loud in front of the whole class. She did not give a chance for everyone to participate which does influence their confidence in being involved in the educational process, inhibiting them from volunteering or attempting to speak in the target language. This gave some children the feeling of being left out, unfortunately.

The lesson only lasted for about forty minutes which is not enough time for the second language learner to understand, embrace, and process the input in order for it to become output.

The class consisted first of the presentation of the letters, pronouncing them for a couple of times. Writing them took a very long time and most of the children wrote the letters with no real concentration on what they were writing, being more concerned with the number completed and how to finish it as quickly as possible. The researcher reached this conclusion from observing Ali while he was writing the letters: she closed his notebook and told him to write the letter he was just writing on another piece of paper. He couldn't write the letter properly .

The second part of the teaching process consisted of students opening their textbooks and having a look at the letters and vocabulary that is presented for the previous letters. The teacher pronounced the words with full focus on the first letter and total negligence to the rest of the letters. The children concentrated on repeating after the teacher and saying the exact thing. With no questions of any kind, they obtain the meaning of the word from the picture. Unfortunately, once the picture is covered, they have no clue of what the meaning of the word is. On the basis of this fact, it could be concluded that the learners are concerned with repetition without actually dealing with the input as information; that is meant to be learnt and handled as a target language.

The third part of the lesson consisted of the learners writing the words. One thing that was noticeable was the competition on who finishes first, even if they had to skip lines.

**This behavior was motivated by the teacher when she kept on saying "has anyone finished yet ?""who will be the first one to finish ?", and so on. The children were forced to concentrate on the quantity and not the quality of what they were writing.**

**The last activity of the lesson was to do some exercises. The only time of the lesson that the children are requested to speak or to answer with their own effort. Depending on the words that are on the same page of the exercise. The exercises at first appear to be really easy since the words and the pictures are right there on the same page. This is a factor that increases the confidence of the children to answer in front of the whole class. This was the time when the class was motivated to get involved in the learning process. The teacher ended the lesson by telling the class to write the letters and the new vocabulary in their notebooks as homework, which made the children feel as if they had more chores to do, instead of having the proper feeling which is dealing with the language in order to learn and develop their English skills for usage afterwards.**

**In further classes the teacher follows the same routine in displaying the letters and repeating them, having students write them and then presenting the vocabulary, writing it and then practice the vocabulary in specific exercises.**

**The exercises were perceived to be easy such as matching words with the pictures, but later accelerated to be more difficult such**

as filling in the missing letters. This type of exercise is very useful for the children who tried to learn each word properly by looking at every letter carefully without neglecting the rest of the letters. But, this exercise was not beneficial for the children who focused on the first letter following the lead of the teacher. Other exercises such as choosing the correct form of the word was very challenging and only those with a keen eye for what they are receiving as input and managing it well until it is produced in a proper manner could participate.

This routine was done each lesson, so the learners expected and knew each and every step before the teacher actually did it. At the same time it was boring and there was no element of fun or, surprise which, the learners needed in order for them to be alert and activated. These learners lacked the most important factor of the learning environment that a learner needs in order for him/her to embrace the input that is received.

During one class, the teacher did startle the students by saying a new phrase "how are you doing?" which did alert the students and made them think. Moreover, they were reminded of it the next class and then practiced in the following classes which had good results: the student learning more phrases to communicate among each other.

Another element of fun to some children was when the teacher made them come up to the board and introduce the letters as if

they were in charge of the class. The teacher presenting the curriculum in this particular way, preventing the children from actually using the language properly in class, (as presenting them with simple phrases including the vocabulary which is presented in the curriculum) . The teacher's lack of experience and knowledge in certain elements of the language; for instance, the pronunciation of certain letters. Lacking the ability of clarifying particular fundamentals such as the cohesion of some letters which combine a totally different sound. The teacher constant usage of the Arabic language.

#### **4.2 Analysis of the Children's Speech and Behavior**

Ali was one of the two students who were observed closely during the semester. At first, he was very keen on learning and paid very close attention to the teacher being his only source of language relying on what the teacher has to say about this completely different language. The very first time the researcher spoke to Ali, he was very shy and his voice was barely heard due to him not used to the language with nearly no confidence in himself.

He would pick up everything the teacher would say which included her mistakes in pronunciation, which were the result of the teacher picking up the mistakes from her teacher. This proves that the educational system is a chain that can not be broken unless there is another source that would correct those

errors or confirm the proper teaching procedures in order to motivate learners. Thus, it is especially essential that the learners have an accurate mentor to guide them to the right pronunciation, for in this country it is not possible for many children to have access to native speakers which would enable them to capture the correct pronunciation of the language .

As a case in point, when the teacher pronounced the word *arm* incorrectly Ali and the rest of the class pronounced it in exactly the same way. The students are convinced that it is totally correct. When the researcher tried to correct the pronunciation, after the next class Ali pronounced it the same way the teacher had done. Another example is when the teacher pronounced the letters J, and G both as J; Ali had the same pronunciation as his teacher.

At the very beginning Ali did as he was told with no questions asked what so ever. Even when two different letters were pronounced exactly the same that did not raise any doubts or at least he did not say anything about it.

One thing that was of great concern is that in the curriculum the children were exposed to new vocabulary that contained letters that they still had not learned, which resulted in the students memorizing words and producing sounds without any concrete or visual base of letters to attach them to a specific sound to go with. An important element that the students lacked was being

exposed to the visual form of the letter and not to the spoken form, at least not formally or properly introduced by the teacher. This element confused the learners which put them in a position to guess the sounds of the letters when they pronounced the whole word. Ali would figure out the sound of the letter from spelling the whole word only when encouraged and guided to do so by the researcher during the after class interviews sessions.

Each class, Ali was improving and able to build up the confidence to speak. Initially, he was not able to speak or to participate, but every time he answered more than once correctly in class he had the courage to speak frankly to the researcher, but unfortunately not to the class in general.

Once the children in class were familiar with more and more letters, the concept of the alphabet appeared to be clearer. They were able to identify further letters in any word they were exposed to.

One more sign of progress that was noticed during Ali's acquisition is that he was asking and demanding for clarification for any confusion, as for example, when he asked about the sound /tʃ/ in the word *picture*. He was also curious about the silent letter e at the end of some words.

With regard to the other students observed during interviews she exhibited a very shy and discreet personality, lacking the confidence to be able to speak a language other than her own. At first she would answer with a very low voice trying to conceal the errors in her pronunciation. In class she had no problem, exhibiting a completely different personality which was , outgoing, and totally confident in interacting with others. She displayed this behavior even when the teacher would ask all the children to repeat a certain letter, or word after her.

When Mirrium listens to the teacher very carefully, she tries to imitate every single pronunciation the teacher utters despite whether it is right or wrong. Correct pronunciation is a thing they will never know since there is no other source to correct that error. The teachers mispronunciation, resulting from her previous experience, influenced Mirrium in a negative way: Mirrium pronounced both letters J, G identically as /J/which did not raise any questions, for Mirrium had 100%confidence in the teacher's knowledge.

When the researcher tried to pronounce any letter or word differently from the teacher, Mirrium still pronounced it the same way the teacher had pronounced it.



She went through the same phase that Ali went through trying to pronounce the letters that she had not studied yet; the researcher motivated and convinced her that she could pronounce the letters by focusing on how she utters the word and what sound she released at every point. A particular area that was confusing for her was the silent letters and letters such as sh, ch, ck, ph, especially how letters were differently pronounced in words than they were presented in the alphabet. All of these concerns prevented Mirrium from having a smooth educational process.

After about three weeks, Mirrium had learned and practiced a number of letters from the alphabet, which made her capable of recognizing and pronouncing with more confidence any word that was presented even though she hadn't studied it before. She needed to be encouraged to pronounce a letter or a word, by saying things such as "you can do it, It's easy, you have pronounced more difficult letters and words" and so on...she was influenced by the teacher very much in many ways, especially the way she pronounced sounds.

There was a time where Mirrium attempted to produce a sentence; although there was an error, it was considered as a brave attempt. In this school environment, the children were not learning to use the language to communicate, only letters and words in isolation. Mirrium used the word girl to refer to

herself: "I girl" leaving out *am* to join the sentence together. This clearly informs that the acquisition process is defected, not covering the whole stages of learning a language such as practicing the oral part (communicating in that language and actually using it). Mainly we can not describe this process which happens in our schools as language acquisition.

When it came to the exercises, both Ali and Mirrium answered them correctly in their schoolbooks, but Ali participated verbally more than Mirrium even if she did know the correct answer. She only participated if directly asked to. Matching the words and the pictures were easy for both of them, filling in the missing letters was sometimes answered correctly and others wrongly. Choosing the correct form was the hardest of all and a lot of mistakes were found; less children would participate during that exercise.

Both Ali and Mirrium reached a level of being able to pronounce any letter due to repetition which led to memorizing. Some words were also read at the first sight and others were spelled out, which demanded some effort and time. The exercises after repetition became more and more easier. Both children improved due to repetition and memorizing, two factors the teacher basically depended on in teaching them.

## **4.3 Analysis of Parental Data**

### **4.3.1 Analysis of the Maternal Interviews**

See Appendix 1

#### **Ali's Mother**

She is a very simple person, very occupied with her four children and house work. Where did you receive your education? Her education was in the field of administration with not any relation to English, although, she cares very much about her child's education. English was one of the important subjects that concerned her the most for her child to learn.

What is your role in the acquisition of your child? She is the person that follows his progress, depending on what Ali informs her about the curriculum, so she does not really teach him, but makes sure that whatever he tells her is done correctly, with no real saying in the matter. Does your husband help in any way and is he available in the language acquisition of your child? She considers her husband to be her reference in case there is any problem .

Do you encourage your child and in what way? She encourages him to acquire the language, and actually use it at home asking him about what he learned at school. Do you think English is enough as a second language or do you think he needs to learn more than one language? She is very satisfied with English being

the only language acquired by her child. She is a mother that wants the best for her child.

According to the previous information it is clear that Ali's mother is not a very educated person, but mainly like any other mother her main concern is her child and his education. She is a very patient person that is open to receiving new information even from her own child.

### **Mirrium's Mother**

Where did you receive your education? Her education was at a computer institution. At what point of your life were you first exposed to the English language? At the age of seventeen. What is your role in the language acquisition of your child? She teaches her daughter on the basis of what she tells her, depending only on that information. Do you encourage your child and in what way? Yes, motivating her to learn a new language. Who do you think is better you or your husband? The husband is much better. Do you think English is enough as a second language or do you think he needs to learn more than one language? No, she also makes her attends French classes. Does your husband help in any way and is he available in the language acquisition of your child? Only when he is home and urgently needed.

She is a mother of three and a house wife. With no background of English related to her education or anything else in her life time. She tries to make up for herself not learning any languages beside her mother tongue, living her dream through her daughter making her learn French beside English which, is a burden for a child at the age of eight. She is more concerned in making her child learn languages not really concerned if that is too much for Mirrium to handle.

#### **4.3.2 Analysis of the Paternal Questionnaires**

**See Appendix 2.**

##### **Ali's Father**

He works ten hours a day, spending very little time with his children. He filled in a questionnaire that contained the following; What kind of education did you receive? Until the first year of high school. Have you ever been exposed to English, At what age? Yes, he when he was thirteen. Do you encourage your son/daughter to learn English how are you involved in the acquisition of your son/daughter language? Yes, he does encourage his son as praising him at any chance he has available. Him working at a company that offered him an English course, benefiting from that assisting his son when needs. He encourages his son to learn and build the confidence of using the language.

Who do you consider better at English? Do you want your child to acquire any other languages beside her mother tongue? He considers himself better at English than his wife, although he is not always available to help. He thinks the English language is enough for Ali to learn.

Ali's father is a person who has been properly exposed to the English language lately, but not in a wide perspective knowing very little about English. A person who is dedicated to his work, but also cares very much about his son's education and well being not pressuring him to learn more than he is capable of.

### **Mirrium's Father**

He filled in a questionnaire that contained the following; What kind of education did you receive? At an Engineering institute after high school. Have you ever been exposed to English, At what age? Yes, at the age of seventeen. Do you encourage your son/daughter to learn English how are you involved in the acquisition of your son/daughter language? Yes, he does encourage his daughter as praising her whenever he she attempts to say a word in English.

Who do you consider better at English? Do you want your child to acquire any other languages beside her mother tongue? He

**considers himself better at English than his wife, although he is putting all the pressure on the mother to teach.**

**He is an engineer who attended four courses of different levels of English that helped him to at least know the very basics of English. He left the teaching part up to the mother, although he is better than the mother in the English language. He encourages his daughter to learn English and French thinking that it is not too much, and at her age it is easy for her to acquire more than one language.**

## **Chapter five**

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

#### **5.1 Summary**

The current study aimed at examining the acquisition of English as a second language by Libyan children at the age of seven and eight. They were randomly chosen with the consideration of the absence of any previous background in English. To answer the research questions cited in the first chapter, the researcher observed the student's performance of the first class to recognize the level of the students, in order to mark their improvement during the nine classes. The methods that were used by the teacher, and whether or not the children faced any difficulties, the effect of the environment and the lack of English background by the parents were other topics studied in this research.

#### **5.2 Conclusions**

On the basis of the data collected during the course of this research, the following conclusions can be made. They are discussed in relation to the research questions outlined in chapter one.



### **5.2.1 Research Question Number One: How do primary children acquire English as a second language?**

As extracted from the data, two facts emerge. When the children come to class and attend each and every lesson, they attempt to focus and pick up every element of the new language. While receiving the input from the teacher, one of the initial and essential factors of acquisition process is the relationship between the teacher and the students. This relationship motivates the students to receive as much information and language as possible. Another important element is the quality of the language that is received by the children, the children act like magnets that absorb the input as they hear, spell, or read. The children acquire the input mainly through repetition. They further process the language by writing it over and over again, which helps them to receive and then produce the information. The learning activities did not achieve the communicative language. The students not capable of communicating in the target language.

### **5.2.2 Research Question Number Two :What are the main difficulties in acquiring English?**

During the process of learning, the students struggle with some difficulties which stand in the way of them obtaining the language easily.

As the researcher investigated and observed carefully the both children under investigation, the teacher being their main resort, which places a great deal of pressure on the teacher. In this case the teacher has to be accurate about the information that is handed to the learners presenting the right form of writing and pronunciation of letters and words.

The students are confused if the someone provides them with a pronunciation and then, is corrected by another person, as occurred in the current study between the teacher(the first person) and the researcher (the other person) . Thus they keep on pronouncing it incorrectly as they heard the first time.

The students face many difficulties at this point of processing the language, such as the result of combining two letters to form a third sound such as s and h creating the sound /ʃ/and the letters p and h creating the sound /f/. Another rule is the silent e that the students see in a word and also utter. These rules should be taught and presented properly.

Furthermore, the students have no real opportunity to express themselves in the new language. Mainly they receive more than they produce. With no confidence to ask for clarification.

The textbook consists of the alphabet letters; there is no attempt at using the vocabulary words associated with each letter in other words not a typical way to teach a language. The teacher does not ask the students about the vocabulary as objects, in order to elicit responses such as "It is an apple" .

**5.2.3 Research Question Number Three: What is the effect of the environment on the learner's progress in acquiring the second language?**

The children start to learn a completely new language in an environment that lacks cooperation or teamwork without using that new language in any way. The children learn the language in a formal instruction, written on the board and then writing it in their notebooks. They refer to each word by a picture to know the meaning and practice the words in exercises. They are told to memorize them by heart after repeating them several times in class, but they do not have the opportunity to actually talk or use the words they have learnt, even if the context is Arabic.

They do not interact with the teacher or the other students or have the opportunity to refer the words to actual living things

except for the words *girl, boy* which the children learned very fast due to referring to an actual girl and boy. The students do not have the opportunity to interact in class or outside it, due to the fact of lacking English speakers whether, they are native or not.

This minimizes the possibility of the students having more practice outside the classroom. Once summer starts, the students will be more distant from the language.

Both Ali and Mirrium have different environments outside the classroom: Ali's mother encourages him to use the language as referring the words to actual things he finds in his environment, although if he pronounced it wrongly she would not know, which will lead to a defected language. While Mirrium's mother also encourages her child to learn the English language and other languages, her mother's motivation is more like pressure on Mirrium. It seems as if the mother wants to live her dreams through her daughter .

**5.2.4 Research Question Number Four: How does the parents lack of knowledge of the English language affect their child's learning of English ?**

The learners were confronted with a totally different language, unaware of any of its elements neither them nor their parents.

This has an effect on the child's learning process, for with other school subjects, they depend on their parents as their resort having an answer and solution for everything. When they came for help with the English language, they found that the mother was asking them for the correct pronunciation. They sometimes found differences between the teachers pronunciation and their parent's pronunciation which is a bit confusing for the child. The learner leaves the classroom with a minimum amount of practice, with no source of English outside the classroom. Thus, the fact that their parents lack knowledge of the English language has a negative influence on the children.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

#### **5.3.1 Recommendations for the Teacher**

The researcher recommends that the teacher should not teach the alphabet but to teach sounds. The first stage of learning a language for the learner is the silent period so, the teacher should not put any pressure of any kind. Asking them to write or to read is too early at this point. The teacher should make second language acquisition similar to first language acquisition by exposing learners to oral input. This method provides the learners with input to feedback on afterwards. The learners will at some state use the input to communicate among each other.

Other problems that should be avoided by the teacher is to present the letters first and after completing the whole alphabet

teaching them the key words, because that eliminates the confusion of the learner when confronted with a word that includes letters he has not been exposed to yet.

The key words should be chosen carefully to avoid long and difficult words such as *elephant* that also contains the combination of two letters producing a third sound in this case the sound /f/. The silent letter e rule should be taught previously. The teacher should focus on the sounds of letters, rather than only the spelling of the words.

### 5.3.2 Recommendations for the Learners.

It is advisable that learners practice after each and every lesson. They should have a copy of the tape the teacher uses in class in order to continue their practice at home. Moreover, the students should be encouraged to teach family members the vocabulary they learn at school. Since students have the ability to say greetings such as *Good morning*, they should learn other greetings such as *Hello, Hi*, etc, such partings as *Good bye, See you later*, Learning some expressions as *what is this?* and asking about photos/objects.

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# **Appendix 1**

## **Maternal Interview Schedule**

**The mothers were both interviewed and asked certain questions in order to elicit information about their child's acquisition of English.**

- 1. Where did you receive your education?**
- 2. At what point of your life were you first exposed to the English language?**
- 3. What is your role in the language acquisition of your child?**
- 4. Do you encourage your child and in what way?**
- 5. Who do you think is better you or your husband?**
- 6. Do you think English is enough as a second language or do you think he needs to learn more than one language?**
- 7. Does your husband help in any way and is he available in the language acquisition of your child?**

## **Appendix 2**

### **Paternal Questionnaire**

**1. What kind of education did you receive?**

**A. University.     ( )**

**B. Institute.     ( )**

**C. High school. ( )**

**2. Have you ever been exposed to English?**

**A. No.             ( )**

**B. Yes.            ( )**

**3. At what age were you exposed to English?**

**A. Between 7 and 10. ( )**

**B. Between 10 and 13. ( )**

**C. Between 13 and 17. ( )**

**D. Between 17 and 20. ( )**

**4. Do you encourage your son/daughter to learn English?**

**A. No.             ( )**

**B. Yes.            ( )**

**5. Are you involved in the acquisition of your son/ daughter language?**

**A. No. ( )**

**B. Yes. ( )**

**C. sometimes. ( )**

**6. Does your child come to you for help with his/her English ?**

**A. No. ( )**

**B. Yes. ( )**

**C. only urgently. ( )**

**7. Who do you consider better at English?**

**A. You (The father). ( )**

**B. The mother. ( )**

**8. Do you want your child to acquire any other languages beside her mother tongue?**

**A. No, I consider English as a school subject.**

**B. Yes, but English is enough.**

**C. Yes, more evenmore than one language(English).**



## **Appendix 3**

### **Schoolbook Curriculum**

**LEARN WITH US**

**ALPHABET**

**LEARN-WRITE-COLOR**

**SECOND LEVEL**