Acquisition of Voiced Stops by Adult Saudi Learners of English
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Researchers normally study the VOT of voiceless stops of L2 English but there is a scarcity of research on the acquisition of voiced stops of English specifically by adult Saudi learners. The current study aims to fill the gap. 20 adult Saudi learners of English and 20 monolinguals (10 native English and 10 Arabic monolinguals) participated in this study. The VOT of the voiced stops was taken in the context of three vowels. The results show that the vowel following a stop does not have any effect on the learning of VOT. Overall, the learning is very poor. Only two participants have learnt [b] but none of them have learnt [g] or [d]. There are signs of learning among the participants and the path of learning shows that English coronal stops are most difficult for the adult Saudi learners of English.

Key words: voiced stops, VOT, pre-voicing, acquisition, L2 phonology
An Action Research Study of the Effectiveness of Two Types of Role-play in Teaching English for Tourism at a Korean University
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Role play is commonly regarded as a useful activity for developing oral skills (Magos and Politi 2008; Maley 1987; Livingstone 1983); however, there is little research on the different types of role play and there is little research on its use in ESP contexts, which is what the present study will do. This presentation will report on a study investigating the effectiveness of two types of role play, SSRP (Semi-Scripted Role-Play) and SSRP-NSRP (Semi-Scripted Role-Play followed by Non-Scripted Role-Play), in the teaching of English for Tourism at a university in Korea. The study used an action research approach (Kemmis and McTaggart 1988) with the aim to improve Tourism English learners’ oral skills. Two groups of second year students from different years participated in the study. Group 1 practised SSRP, while Group 2 SSRP-NSRP over a semester. Students’ oral skills and general proficiency were tested in week 4 (pre-test) and week 12 (post-test) each year. Data were analysed using two-way ANOVA to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the means of the pre-tests and post-tests of the SSRP group and SSRP-NSRP group. The results show that both years’ learners’ oral ability was enhanced. But SSRP-NSRP helped learners advance their speaking skill more than SSRP. The implications of the findings for teaching English for Tourism will also be discussed.

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Caregivers, even without consciously being aware of it, use a unique register to infants known as Child Directed Speech. Caregivers often use this register as a means to try and communicate with a child. As well as teaching a child the turn taking structure that we use in social interactions, caregivers also praise or correct the child when it attempts to communicate with the caregiver. Previous research has been divided on whether caregivers provide children with negative evidence (corrections of the child's incorrect utterances), and whether this actually aids the child in its language development. Saxton's (1997) study into the reaction of children who were exposed to either positive or negative evidence when observing novel verbs found that when positive evidence was used, children tended to hesitate using the correct irregular form of the novel verbs, but those who were exposed to negative evidence were more confident in using the correct irregular form. Thus suggesting that negative evidence does help language development in the short term. The present corpus study involved analysing a transcript from a native English child named Thomas, aged 2;5;5 from the CHILDES database (MacWhinney, B. 2000), containing just under 1400 utterances of data. The study aimed to answer two questions in regards to these types of feedback. Firstly, do caregivers use more negative evidence than positive (as claimed by Demetras et al. (1986))? Secondly, by observing the types of feedback that caregivers use, such as explicit corrections or a continuation of the conversation, it may be possible to interpret the reason why caregivers use feedback in the first place.

I analysed the corpus and looked for examples of interactions between the mother and child, totalling 127 instances. Then I would categorise them depending on the feedback the mother used. The feedback types include: (Positive Evidence) Explicit praise and continuation of the conversation, (Negative Evidence) Corrections, repetitions, clarification questions and topic shifts. The instances of each type of feedback were counted and the results showed that negative evidence (62%) was used overwhelmingly more than positive evidence (37%) in turn taking interactions. Furthermore, observing the negative evidence in particular the caregivers used repetitions which included an error (41%) the most but followed closely by clarification questions (32%). However, I noticed that in many instances the caregiver would employ more than one of these feedback strategies so I counted those combinations and found that the caregiver preferred to use a repetition followed by a clarification question. It can be argued that this gives an insight into why caregivers use feedback; to firstly repeat what the child says to confirm the phonological form of the utterance and the clarification question aims to understand the semantics behind the child's utterance. It must be noted that this suggestion on why caregivers use feedback is only based on the evidence found in this corpus and a bigger scale study should be carried out in order to confirm the findings in this study.

References

Responses to Errors in Children’s Language Acquisition
Harriet Bibi Stacey

When acquiring language children make many mistakes, and how they eventually learn what is right and what is wrong is a fundamental question in child language acquisition research. It may be that this is entirely up to their parent’s or guardian’s guidance - as proposed by the Usage Based theory (Tomasello 2000) or it may be due to an inbuilt ability for language learning - the Innatist theory (Ambridge & Lieven 2011). The aim of this study is to investigate the extent to which child directed speech provides children with adequate information regarding which of their utterances contain errors (negative evidence).

This corpus study focuses on adult’s responses and reactions to children when they produce errors and mistakes in their speech. I chose to categorise the types of responses used in reaction to errors; implicit corrections – this is when the adult subtly hinted that the child had made a mistake, for example if the child said “we play in park today” the mother replies “yes, you and John played in the park today, didn’t you?” Explicit corrections were another category, which is the adult making it blatantly obvious that a child has made a mistake for example the child saying “I hurted my hand” and the mother responding with “no, we don’t say ‘hurted’, we say ‘hurt’”. Expatiations are another kind of response, they refer to when the adult corrects the child’s sentence while reproducing the sentence and adding extra information on the end of this. For example if the child says “it red” and the mother may respond with “yes, it’s red and sparkly, isn’t it?” – correcting the child’s morphology of ‘it’. Expansions were a fourth category – this is when the adult corrects the child by reformulating the child’s sentence into a sentence that is grammatically correct. The adults also often failed to correct to the child’s incorrect utterances, therefore this was taken into account as a category as well.

The data was taken from the CHILDES database - I looked at one transcript from the Thomas corpus – a transcript of a child named Thomas at the age of 3 years and 26 days. This transcript was examined for these different phenomena and the frequencies were compared. I showed what percentage of each category related to different types of language errors – syntactic, lexical, phonological or morphological. My research included the comparison of language errors to social errors in relation to explicit corrections. The conclusions from this research were that negative evidence was used more frequently than no correction in response to the child’s mistakes, and of these negative evidence categories implicit corrections were found to be most common. The research showed that the majority of mistakes responded with either an implicit correction, expatiation, expansion or no relevant response were syntactical errors. Lastly, the results also showed that when looking into explicit corrections, the mother used this type of mistake more for social mistakes than linguistic mistakes.

Generally, the results from my research support the Usage Based theory over the Innatist theory. This is shown by the amount of negative evidence supplied by the adult in my research – as this is used much more than not correcting the child at all, it suggests that the child received adequate negative evidence to support language acquisition.

References
Differential Prosodic Encoding of Focus in Hijazi Arabic (HA)
Muhammad Swaileh ALZAIDI

This paper presents results from an empirical study of Information Focus, Contrastive Focus (aspects of Information Structure (IS), that is, concepts relating to the distribution of ‘new’ and ‘contrast’ information (Chafe, 1976) in HA. It provides both a phonological (i.e. couched in Autosegmental-Metrical Approach (AM)), and phonetic (i.e. couched in Parallel Encoding and Target Approximation (PENTA)) analysis of the experimental data. It aims to answer three research questions (a) Are Information focus and In-situ Contrastive-focus realized prosodically differently from each other and from its unfocused counterpart in broad-focus utterance in HA?, (b) How is Left-Contrastive focus, as a noncanonical syntactic option, realized phonologically in HA?, (c) Is Left-Contrastive focus realized prosodically differently from its In-situ Contrastive focus counterpart?.

The current study used a total of five sentences (i.e. answers corresponding to the prompt questions). These five sentences: two two-word intransitive structures and three four-word transitive structures, were recorded in four focus conditions (Broad Focus, Information Focus, In-situ Contrastive Focus, and Left-Contrastive Focus) and in three focus sentential positions (initial, penultimate, final) by 16 subjects (8 females, 8 males). Each sentence in each focus conditions was repeated six times by each subject in random in three different sessions. Only the last five repetitions were used for data analysis.

The phonological analysis reveals that Information Focus, and In-situ Contrastive Focus were realized with [H*+L]. As for the post-focus items, their pitch accents are lowered compared to their counterpart in broad-focus utterance. As for the Left-contrastive focus, it was phonologically associated with [H*+L] pitch accent and the post-focus items were deaccented. As for phonetic analysis, it reveals that the pitch range of the stressed syllable of Information focus and contrastive focus was significantly more expanded than of its unfocused counterpart. In the initial-focus condition, the pitch range of the stressed syllable of contrastive focus was significantly more expanded than of new-information focus counterpart. However, Information focus and in-situ contrastive focus in both sentence-penultimate and final position showed no prosodic difference. As for the post-focus items in both information focus condition and in-situ contrastive focus condition, their maximum F0 were found to be significantly lower than their counterpart in broad-focus utterance.

Selected References
Verbal Stems in Libyan Arabic
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The role of stem allomorphy in lexeme formation has been discussed in the description of a number of languages (e.g. Latin (Aronoff, 1994) and Sanskrit (Stump, 2001) ). Yet, the status of stems in Libyan Arabic (LA) verbal system has not figured prominently in the contemporary morphology discourse, although the complexity of this non-concatenative language can provide a rich variety of material for the morphological theory.

Traditionally, LA triliteral verbs are divided into four verbal forms: strong, double, hollow and defective. These different forms can be treated as inflectional classes. However, unlike languages, such as Latin, which have typical inflectional classes, determining the forms of inflectional endings (e.g. amo ‘love’, stem ama:), in LA, verbal form types can determine the forms of verb stems. For example, if a lexeme belongs to the strong form type (e.g. kitab ‘to write’), the stem of each inflected form of that lexeme will have a form determined by the verbal form type (kitabt ‘you wrote’, kitabna‘ we wrote’).

Unlike most of the previous work on LA verbal system, which has offered a descriptive analyses based on the phonological system of verbs, this study follows a different approach using a realizational model to account for LA verbal stem alternations. Therefore, the aim is to consider the applicability of the notion stem allomorphy as developed in current morphological theory to LA verbal inflection and its implications for an exhaustive description of this system. We will assess the status of the LA perfect verbal stem as ‘morphemic’: Aronoff’s stem notion of meaningless sound forms in the light of data from LA inflectional morphology.

References
The dominance of Wolof in urban Senegal: 
A threat to minority languages and language communities
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Until recently, there has been little interest in African dominant languages. Most of the current literature is focused on the dominance of English as an international language, and the threat it poses to the world’s linguistic diversity because of its global power (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000, Nettle & Romaine 2000, Phillipson 1992).

Research has shown that most languages, and the most vulnerable among them, are spoken by small communities, often hunter-gatherers who are dominated by neighbouring sedentary peoples. This inequality leads them to adopt the language of their powerful farming neighbours and to give up their own. They do not even get as far as learning English, Arabic, or French (Batibo, 1992). So although the place of English and French in African society is the subject of much debate, the likelihood of either language actually displacing local African languages is not strong.

On the basis of research I carried out in four cities in Senegal, there were major findings regarding the dominance of Wolof and the state of minority languages. The research, which involved 1,200 participants using questionnaires, oral interviews and general observations, was designed to capture the changing pattern of language use and attitude of participants. The results show that it is Wolof and not French, that poses the greatest threat to minority languages and language communities in Senegal.

References