DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF THE ACQUISITION OF NEGATION AND INTERROGATION BY CHILDREN NATIVE SPEAKERS OF QATARI DIALECT

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I. INTRODUCTION:

" Language acquisition is a creative process. The grammar develops in stages and at each stage the child's utterances conform to the rules and regularities acquired at that stage. The mistakes (…) reveal these rules. Children seem to form the simplest and most general rule they can from the language input they receive, and to be so "pleased" that they use the rule wherever they can." (Fromkin & Rodman 1998:333)

II. AIMS OF THE STUDY

The study is an investigation of First Language Acquisition developmental sequences of Negation and Interrogation by children native speakers of Qatari dialect. The two structural areas were chosen because:

a) QUESTIONS AND NEGATIONS, AS BASIC COMPONENTS OF LANGUAGE, PROVIDE RICH DATA FOR THE STUDY OF SYNTAX AS WELL AS OF SEMANTICS.
b) THEY HAVE BEEN MUCH STUDIED IN THE CASE OF ENGLISH AND OTHER LANGUAGES.
c) THEY ARE ACQUIRED EARLY; ALSO THEY ARE "EASY" TO LEARN WITH STRAIGHT-FORWARD PRAGMATIC AND SEMANTIC NOTIONS (KRASHEN, 1981).
d) MOST IMPORTANTLY, ASKING AND NEGATING ARE ESSENTIAL FOR COMMUNICATION EVEN AT VERY EARLY STAGES.

The investigation is an attempt to contribute further to our understanding of First Language Acquisition processes. The aims of the study, briefly stated, are to determine that:

　　1) The development towards the target is a creative system of increasing complexity
　　2) The linguistic behaviours of the acquirers are systematic and rule-governed.
　　3) The developmental sequences can be identified for each of the syntactic areas studied.

III. ARABIC DIGLOSSIA, TRIGLOSSIA OR A CONTINUUM?

Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is the written variety of the language, common to all literate Arabic speakers in the world, used in the media, in literature, at school and for all literate activities, and almost exclusively used in its spoken form in the electronic media. It is a unified, codified pan-Arab variety of Arabic, the modern descendant of Classical Arabic (Holes 1995). However, MSA is not the spoken language acquired by children. Arabic constitutes the classical case of diglossia, which involves a highly divergent and often grammatically more complex literary variety, usually older than the

spoken variety, learnt by formal education and used for formal, mostly written purposes (Ferguson 1959). Arabic-speaking children acquire the local dialect at home, and learn MSA in school.

Scholars (Gaber, 1966 ; Chejne, 1969; Altoma, 1974; Mitchell, 1980 and Zughoul, 1980) view the language situation in the Arab world as characterised by the existence of three different norms of Arabic: Traditional Classical Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic and Different Arabic dialects. However, there are Arab grammarians and linguists who belief that the situation of Arabic is not a mere diglossic or even triglossic situation, but as Bakalla (1984:87) puts it " a spectrum or better still a continuum which has at one extreme the purest Classical Arabic and at the other, the purest type of colloquial Arabic".

 The focus of our discussion here is the acquisition of Negation and Interrogation in Qatari Arabic dialect. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study in this area (see Al-Buainain 1999).

VI. DATA:

The data have been collected in a day-by-day routine in the form of written notes. I have never maintained a rigid data collecting procedure including fixed intervals, time limits of recording sessions, etc. It seems to me that such rigid procedures, as applied by other researchers in the past, have not produced data rich enough to give us really a detailed picture of a child's language development. The subjects are my children whose ages range from 1 year and 6 months to 9 years.

V. CALSSIFICATION AND DESCRIPTION OF RULES OF NEGATION IN QATARI DIALECT:

It is worthwhile pointing out that what we are interested in describing here is the surface structure of the investigated sentences as acquirers see them. That is the actual realization of the Qatari Dialect negative sentences in their final forms as the child would have uttered them rather than getting involved with complex explanation of the deep structure relationships between the constituents.

Negation in Qatari Dialect (QD) as in Arabic is exclusively preverbal. Usually, the verb is at the beginning of the sentence, hence the negative particle is in sentence initial position. The negative particle also serves as a tense carrier because the verb form that follows is usually imperfect (verb stem).

I. Verbal and Nominal Sentences:

In Arabic, the normal, non-emphatic word order is verb, subject and object. In general, if the verb is perfect, it precedes the subject, but if the verb is imperfect, either the subject or the verb can occur first (Abboud et al, 1968:180-181). This difference in order between the 2 patterns is reflected in a difference in number agreement between subject and verb. If the subject comes first (i. e. Nominal Sentence) the verb agrees with it in number as well as in person and gender. However, if the verb precedes the subject (i.e. Verbal Sentence) it is always in the singular, whether the subject is singular or plural. Still, the person and gender agree with the subject.

In verbal sentences, verb stems follow the Arabic negative particles. Arabic subjects follow the Main verb. The Arabic verb shows two indicative conjugations for Aspect: the Imperfect (morphologically marked by prefixes) and the Perfect (marked by suffixes) which mainly indicate whether the action is viewed as incompleted or completed, respectively. In the absence of any further temporal specification, the Imperfect serves to indicate an action which is regarded as in progress (at the present time or repeated action or with future time adverbials).

Qatari Dialect prefers verbal sentences than nominal sentences in negation. However, there are other Arabic Dialects, which use nominal sentences in negation; for example, Egyptian Dialect. All negative particles in Arabic are not used in the dialect except for /ma:/ and /la:/. Instead, the dialect invented new particles to express negative (Al-Matooq, 1986:161), for example; /mob/ is used in Qatari Dialect.

  1). /la:/: The negative particle /la:/ is used to negate sentences containing a verb in the imperfect, by placing it before the verb or noun; for example:

/ la yl'bu:n fi: alṣa:r' / (Do not (let them) play in the street)
/la: tel'bu:n fi alṣa:r' / (Do not play in the street) *[imperative]*

Usually the verb or noun is either negated by /ma:/ or /mob/ and infronted by the negative particle /la:/; for example:

/la: ehoh ma: ga:li / (No he didn't tell me)
/la: ma: sa:fert fi al'ṭleh/ (No I didn't travel during the vacation)

  2) /mob/: /mob/ + Verb {+subjunctive + imperfect} expresses an emphatic negative in the future equivalent to 'will not' or ' be + not + going + to + V'; for example:

/ mob ra:yḥ alsghel bukreh/ (I'm not going to work tomorrow)

It is also used to negate nouns; for example:

/ mob sara ali fa:zet belja:yzeh /   ((It is) Not Sara who won the prize)
/mob alḥyi:n benro:h/   (Not now(we are going)

It could express an emphatic negative; for example:

/la: mob ehoh ali ga:li / (No he was not the one who told me)

3. /ma:/ In Arabic this negative particle occurrence is governed by the aspect of the verb which must always be perfect. The particle /ma:/ is a tense marker, therefore, the verb is superficially transformed and assigned the features (+ imperfect + jussive). This 'Transformational rule' is obligatory and should be applied after the insertion of /ma:/ has been effected; for example:

 /ma: kaleto ṣei/ (You did not eat anything)
/ma: darait wala: e'lemt/ (I didn't know)

However, in QD it could be also used to negate verbs in present tense; for example;

/ ha:theh ma: eysi:r / (This can not be)
/saleteh ma: ey'ref/ (I asked him; he doesn't know)

4**)** *Negative Imperative*:

The negative item must always be realized as /la:/ + V (+ Jussive) in the structure S ---
Neg. + Imp S. Semantically speaking, this denotes prohibition; (i.e. negative order
requiring the addressed person *Not* to do whatever is indicated by the adjacent verb).
This is similar to the English (*do not*) in : *Do not drive too fast,* where both Neg. and
Imp. are incorporated. Obviously, the subject is always the 2nd person (singular, dual or
plural). The subject, as in positive imperative sentences, is usually absent in the surface
structure. The Arabic verb in the imperative mood is marked for number and gender.
For example:

/la: tel'bu:n fi alsa:r' / (Do not play in the street) *[imperative]*

II. *Equational Sentences:*

In Arabic, an equational sentence is called / mubtada? wa xabar/ (theme-rheme
constructions). Generally speaking, Arabic equational sentences correspond to English
sentences, which have the structures below where the tense constituent is Present

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{ NP        { Aux              [Be + Predicate]   }     }
{           {Pred. VP              VP Pred.}      }
{ S          Phrase                   Ph.   S }
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The auxiliary constituent is present in the surface structure of an Arabic equational
sentence, when a non-present point of temporal reference is to be indicated. This is
signaled by the presence of the 'incomplete' verb /kana/. Thus, the Arabic equational
sentence is composed of a subject and a predicate with no verb. The predicate can be a
noun phrase (predicate nominal), an adjective or an adverbial phrase. The predicate
adjectives and the predicate nominals agree with the subject NP both in gender and
number. Usually, they are indefinite (ending in –un, the nominative case marker with
the exception of the proper foreign nouns). However, when the predicate adjectives and
predicate nominals are defined, a 3rd person pronoun, which agrees with the subject in
number and gender and acts as a copula, is introduced before the predicate constituent;
for example, /ha:tha: huwa alkita:bu/ (This is the book). Arab grammarians have
called this pronoun /damayi:r mafsaool/ (the pronoun of separation), because it
separates the subject NP from the predicate adjective or nominal, which otherwise
would be interpreted as a modifier. The subject of Arabic equational sentences; which
may be a common or a proper noun, a pronoun or a demonstrative is usually definite
and precedes the predicate. Yet, when the subject is indefinite and the predicate is an
adverbial phrase, the subject could be placed after the predicate; e.g. /rajulun fi
almanzil/ (+ Nominative case) or / fi almanzil rajulan/ (+ genitive case) (There is a
man in the house) (Abubaker, 1970 and AbdelHamid, 1972). In Qatari Dialect /mob/ is
used to negate such sentences.

e.g. /altefaheh mob ekbyreh/ (*The apple not big)

/mob <u>h</u>eloh festa:neha/ (*Not pretty her dress)

VI. DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF NEGATION

Abdulkarim and Roeper (1998:39) state that "Because negation exhibits a great deal of language-particular variations, a child may not initially see how his language represents negation". Through the analysis of the data, an attempt will be made to determine the stages of development of the acquisition of the negative formation (the most and the least favoured type of negative items).

Wode (1976:92-101) proposed to cover four very early stages for the acquisition of negation systems in natural languages. He used data from different languages, mainly English, German and Swedish. The stages are listed below:

Stage I: one word negation.
Stage IIa: anaphoric negation: the negative relationship does not hold between negative particle and the rest of the utterance with which negative occurs in construction
e.g. (no milk) [i.e. he doesn't want to drink it]
Stage IIb: non-anaphoric negation: the negative relationship holds between the negative particle and some part or the whole of the sentence or phrase with which the negative particle occurs in construction
e.g. I don't want to go.
Stage III: intra-sentential negation: This type gradually replaces IIb syntactically and phonetically. In addition, the range of 'negated' relations and constituents gradually expand.

It should be noted, that although we present what may look like separate stages of development in negation acquisition, there is no clear cut difference between these developmental stages. On the contrary, there is an overlap of two or more stages in the children's utterances.

Preliminary Stage:

Children use /ba:<u>h</u>/ (There is no + Noun / Finish) in initial or final position to express negation. However, in Qatari dialect /ba:<u>h</u>/ is not considered as a negative particle, since it is found only in baby talk and not in adult's language. Usually, the caretaker is using this baby talk form to indicate negation. /ba:<u>h</u>/ was found in children's speech very early (at the age of 19 months) even before the /la:/ (no) negative particle. The following examples illustrate this stage:

1. /ba:<u>h</u> aoa:n/ (there is no colours)[the second word is pronounced in adult's language as /aloa:n/]
2. /babah ba:<u>h</u>/ (Dady is not here)
3. Mother: /wien <u>h</u>ali:bk ?/ (Where is your milk?)
   Child: /ba:<u>h</u>/ (finish)

4. /ba:<u>h</u> namena/ (*no ant)) [the second word is pronounced in adult's language as /namelah/]

Stage One:

The earliest and simplest form of negation heard from children was the free form /la:/ (no). Children seem to comprehend this form first (1 year and 8 months), may be, because it is used to warn them against doing something forbidden. At this very early stage /la:/ is very convenient to express children's feelings towards something or even someone whom they do not like. Children seem to have acquired a simple rule to negate utterances: they simply add /la:/ initially to the sentences which are kept as they are   without the morphophonemic changes required in order to   produce the correct negated sentences. Examples of this stage are:

1. /la: hali:b/ (no milk) [i.e. he doesn't want to drink it]
2. /la: ahmed/ (no Ahmed)
3. /la: sama/ (no Shamma)
 4. /ma:ly kourah, la: anas/ (it is my ball, not Anas's)
 5. / la: ra:h/ (* not go) [should be /ma: ra:h/]
 6.   /la: ahni:h/ (not here)

Stage Two:

/ma:/ and /mob/ + Verb were noticed in children's speech. It is not clear if these patterns of negation actually develop after the form postulated as Stage One. However, at this early stage children were not able to use the negative particles with the correct tense or form of the verb. The morpheme /ma:/ is generally used in verbal sentences, usually to negate verbs in past tense. The occurrence of the negative particle /mob/ is governed by the aspect of the verb which must always be imperfect.

1. / ma: sawaith/ (I didn't do it)) [*Age: 7 years and 6 months*]
2.   /ma:bi a:kel/ (I don't want to eat) [*Age: 6 years and 6 months*]
3. /ma: ?hebek/ (I don't love you) [*Age: 7 years*]
4. /ma: ?:bi:/ (I don't want) [*Age: 4 years and 6 months*]
5.   /ana ma: xa:f/ (I am not afraid) [*Age: 7 years and 6 months*]
6.   Mother: /tabyi:n taklyi:n ?/ (Do you want to eat?)
     Child: (1 year and 10 months): /babi:/ (I don't want))[the word is pronounced in adult's language as /ma:bi/)
7. /mob ra:yh almadresh bekreh/ (I'm not going / I will not go to school tomorrow) [*Age: 6 years and 6 months*]
 8.   Mother: /darasti: ?/ (* Did you study?))
     Child: /ma:bi/ (I don't want (to)) [*Age: 6 years and 8 months*]
 9.   /ma sawyt alwa:jeb/ (I didn't do the homework)) [*Age: 6 years and 10 months*]
10. Child: /xsa:reh ma: seft almater/ (Unfortunately, I didn't see the rain) [*Age: 7 years*]
12. /so:fo: ma endeh sa'er/ (Look, he has no hair)) [*Age: 7 years and 6 months*]
13. / ma: 'endehum saya:reh/ (hey don't have a car) [*Age: 8 years*]
14. / ma: sawait/ (I didn't do) [*Age: 5 years and 6 months*]
15. /mob saya:rethum/ (* Not their car) [*Age: 7 years and 11 months*]
16. /mob al'a:by/ (* Not my toys) [*Age: 5 years and 6 months*]
17. /mob heloh almasrahyh/ (* not nice the play) [*Age: 6 years*]
18. /mob heloh almadresh/ (* not nice the school) [*Age: 5 years and 6 months*]
 19. Mother: / hatheh alkta:b ?/ (Is this the book?)

Child: /mob ha:theh/ (*not this) [*Age: 7 years*]

The negation data show many instances in which children used the /ma:/ and /mob/ forms of negation when another form(s) should have been used (i.e. overgeneralization). In some cases the two particles were used interchangeably even at an advanced stage of childhood as can be noticed in example (8) above.

1. /ma: yro:h/ [the correct form should be /ma: ra:h/ (he didn't go). Usually /ma:/ is used to negate verbs in Past tense. Or /ma:bi aro:h/ (I don't want to go)]
2. /ma: helo/ (not good/sweet) [The correct form is /mob helo/]
3. /mob yl'b/ [*Age: 4 years and 9 months*]] [The correct form is /mob la:'b/ (I'm not playing/going to play) or /ma:bi al'b/ (I don't want to play)]
4. Mother(holding and pointing to a video cassette): /ha:thyh sefna:h wala la ?/ (this we have watched or not?)
   Child (*six years old*): /mob sefna:h/ (we haven't watched it) [The correct form is /ma: sefna:h/]
5. / hatheh ma: galam, hatheh jeha:z/ (This is not a pen, this is remote control) [*Age: 2 years and 6 months*] {The correct form is /mob galam/}

However, in QD it could be also used to negate verbs in present tense; for example;

/ ma: eysi:r/ (It can not be) [*Age: 5 years and 6 months*]
/ma: ey'ref/ (He doesn't know) [*Age: 6 years and 6 months]*

Repeating the negativity, but not the same form of negative, is a linguistic device children start to use as a way of stressing their denial or refusal of what the adult suggests, requests or asks. This type of negation is formed by /la:/ plus the negative morpheme /mob/ or /ma:/.

1. /la: mob ana/ (No it is not me) [*Age: 5 years and 6 months*]
2. /la: ma: srabt mai/ (No I didn't drink water) [*Age: 7 years and 6 months*]
3. /la: ma: sawieth/ (No I didn't do it) [*Age: 7 years and 8 months*]
4. /mob ahmed la:/ (It isn't Ahmed no) [*Age: 6 years and 5 months*]
5. /la: ma: helo/ (No, not good/sweet) [*Age: 5 years and 4 months*]

/la:/ occurs in a sentence initial, medial and final position at this stage. It can be used initially or medially depending on the speaker's intention. It may negate the whole utterance if used initially or may negate a constituent in an utterance if used medially.

The following examples also illustrate repetition of negation with other devices, namely, /ma:?bi:/ + Verb + /wala:/ + Noun. These were uttered nearly at the age of six.

1. /ma:?bi: aro:h wala moka:n/ (I don't want to go (to) no where) [*Age: 7 years and 6 months*]
2. /ma:?bi: a:kel wala si:/ (I don't want to eat nothing) [*Age: 7 years and*]
3. /ma sa:ferneh wala si:/ (We didn't travel) [*Age: 7 years and 9 months*]

Stage Three:

This stage is marked by the acquisition of the correct form of the negative particle along with the correct form of the verb. This type of negation *(negative imperative)* involves the complexity of affixing both a prefix and a suffix to the negated word and the word may undergo complex morphophonemic changes such as a change in vowel length or shift in major stress. Semantically speaking, *negative imperative* denotes prohibition; i.e. negative order requiring the addressed person not to do whatever is indicated by the adjacent verb.

1. Mother: /la: etswi: haṣakel/ (Don't do like this) *[imperative]*
   Child: /ma: sawait/ (I didn't do) [*Age: 5 years and 6 months*]
2. Mother: /la: atro:ḥi:n m'a:hom/ (Don't go with them) *[imperative]*
   Child: /mob ra:yḥeh/ (I'm not going) [*Age: 7 years and 6 months*]
3. / mamah la: et'almeen/ (Mummy don't tell) *[imperative]* [*Age: 7 years and 8 months*]
4. / mamah la: etro:ḥeen/ (Mummy don't go) *[imperative]* [*Age: 5 years and 11 months*]
5. /la: mama/ (no Mum) [asking the mother not to do something] [*Age: 4 years*]

It could be very well that the negated stative verb /ma:?bi:/ (I don't want) is first acquired as a unit which is similar to the analyzed (don't) in English. Note the following example:

Mother: /la tṣrbi: bibsi waid/ (Do not drink too much Pepsi) *[imperative]*
Child: /ma:abi:/ (I don't want (to))

The negated imperative, however, occurs for the first time in the children's speech around the age of 2 years and 6 months, without the correct imperative marker. The children seem to have simply to add /la:/ initially to the imperative sentence which is kept as it is without the morphophonemic changes required in order to produce the correct negated imperative as can be noticed in example (5) above.

In Arabic, the imperative mood of the verb is used to form second person (singular, dual or plural) positive imperatives. The subject is usually absent in the surface structure. The verb is marked for number and gender. In negative imperative sentence, the negative item must be always realized as /la:/ + Verb (+ Jussive). Therefore, acquisition of Arabic imperative negative indicates acquisition of complicated items. However, this is not an outstanding situation. Since, "mastery of the language system occurs with ease and surprising speed and normally without help from any special educator (…) {children} come to control virtually all the simple and sophisticated grammatical devices in their language. No other organism does so." (Dodd and White 1980:266).

VII. CLASSIFICATION AND DESCRIPTION OF RULES OF INTERROGATION IN QATARI DIALECT:

One crucial fact about interrogatives is that they resemble imperatives in that they are semantically a special kind of request (Baker 1970). However, while imperatives may

involve some extra linguistic behavior or action, questions are, in most cases, limited to linguistics responses. The interrogative mood is more commonly expressed by particles, by distinctive word order or merely by intonation   (Trask 1993). As for intonation, Horton and Turnage (1976:315) state that " the most significant characteristic in the babbling of children is the intonation counter or rhythm of the utterance. That is, children produce sound sequences that have no meaning and no definable phoneme structure but do have recognizable intonation contours, such as those that characterize questions or exclamations".

The following are different types of interrogation found in QD.

1) *Yes/No questions: (Declarative + Intonation)*
I. Verbal and Nominal sentences

 /ra<u>h</u>ti al'res ?/ (*you went to the wedding? [feminine])

In Qatari Dialect, there is a particle for the future tense : /b/ this is preceding the verb which should have the following characteristics [+imperfect +person + number]

/betro:<u>h</u>ain al'res ?/ (Are you going to the wedding? [feminine])

II. Equational Sentences:

   / 'nedech {+ Noun}? / (have you got [feminine + singular]?)
   / 'nedek {+ Noun}?/ (have you got [masculine + singular]?)
   / 'nedekem {+ Noun}?/ (have you got [plural]?)

2) *Information questions*

For information questions there are other particles which are inserted at the beginning of the utterance to inquire about people, place, time, number; etc:

i) /wo<u>s</u>o/ or /we<u>s</u>/ or /<u>s</u>enho/ or /<u>s</u>eno/ or /<u>s</u>-/ + Verb {present or past] (What)
   e.g /wo<u>s</u>o alqada ?/ (What for lunch?)
    /we<u>s</u> betsao:y ?/ (What are you going to do?)
    /we<u>s</u>o ha:<u>th</u>i:h ?/ (What is this?)
    /<u>s</u>tgo:lyn ?/ (*what are you saying?)
    /we<u>s</u>o etgo:lyn ?/ (*what are you saying?)

ii) /lay<u>s</u>/ or /i<u>s</u>leh/ or /e<u>s</u>u:leh/ or /warah/ [the last form is usually used by old people] (Why)

   e.g. /lay<u>s</u> ma: re<u>h</u>t m'a :hem ?/ (Why didn't you go with them?) [masculine]
iii) /meta/ (When)

   e.g. /meta benthy elfa<u>s</u>el ?/ (When does the term end?)

iv) /wein/ (Where)

e.g. /wein sa:knyn ?/ (Where are you staying/living?)

v) /men wein/ (from where)

e.g. /men wein ento: ?/ (*from where are you?)

vi) /men/ or /menho/ [*for masculine*] /menhi:/ [for *feminine*] (Who)

 e.g. /men(ho) edarskim ?/ (Who is teaching you?)

  /men yetekalem ?/ (Who is speaking?){on the phone}

vii) /?s̲lu:n/ or /kaif/ (How) or /?b̲s̲eneu/ or /?b̲s̲enhou/ (With what)

   e.g. /?s̲lu:n entesarf ?/ (How can we manage?)

 viii) /kem/or /kam/ (How much)

   /ebkam s̲aryty s̲an̲tatech ?/ (*With how much did you buy your bag?)

3. Negative questions:

Langendoen   (1970:155-69) points out that negative questions are semantically problematic, because they do not function as denials of questions. Instead, they are used when the speaker expects a positive answer (Yes) to the corresponding affirmative questions; e.g. when asking *Isn't he coming?*, we expect the answer to the corresponding affirmative question: *Is he coming?* , (i.e. Yes). Negative questions combine in their formation both questions and negative constructions. In Standard Arabic, in the formation of Negative Yes/No question, the interrogative particle /?a/ is placed before the negative element (which is usually in sentence initial position).

The following are examples from QD:

e.g. /ma: tabwn s̲a:i ?/ (*Don't you like (some) tea ?)
     /ma: tabwn h̲ata eghawh/ (*Don't you want even (some) coffee ?)

VIII. DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF INTERROGATION

Very young children can produce questions using only a rising intonation, rather than a particular syntactic structure. Later, at around two to three years, children begin to use information questions using the appropriate word order. Children's speech at this stage is still telegraphic, including only morphemes and words that carry important semantic content. Gradually a child will begin to include different inflectional morphemes in his or her utterances, but these function morphemes are not acquired randomly. Instead, the child acquires them in a remarkably consistent order. In time, of course, they learn to consistently produce questions in the same ways that adult speakers around them do.

Stage One: Yes / No Questions (Declarative + intonation)

The earliest form of interrogation is declarative sentences with a rising intonation, which is probably a stage acquired by children of age 2 or before during the one-word stage. This form could be universal since "declarative sentences are generally considered to be somehow more basic or fundamental than questions" (Brody 1984:713). Exceptions, however, are found in languages which do not make use of declarative sentences as a tool for questioning, e.g. Finish.

Evidence from the available literature of acquisition of other Arabic dialects as a first language (Omar 1973 and Samdi 1979) indicates that intonation marks the differential use of questions, requests and declaratives at least within a few months of the first word stage. Sometimes after one year (it varies from child to child and has nothing to do with how intelligent the child is), children begin to use the same string of sounds repeatedly to 'mean' the same thing. At this point of time, they have learned that sounds are related to meanings and they are producing their first 'words'. Most children seem to go through the 'one-word=one sentence' stage. According to Stubbs (1995:379) "holophrases are a feature of early child language". These one-word sentences (if one can call them sentences at all) are called holophrastic sentences. Of the various grammatical devices children might begin to learn after intonation, order is the first to be used (Jannedy et al. 1994). The Yes/No interrogative sentences develop in length and complexity corresponding to the development of the declarative sentences. Examples of this stage are:

I. Verbal and Nominal sentences

1. /ahmed fi albyt ?/ (Ahmed at home?) [*Age: 2 years and 10 months*]
2. /enti: t'ba:neh ?/ (You [feminine] are tired?) [*Age: 3 years*]
3. /enteh 'yza:n ?/ (You [masculine] are tired?) [*Age: 3 years*]
4. /tel'ab m'a:y beteh ?/ (*[you] play cards with me?) [*Age: 5 years and 7 months*]
5. /rah babah ?/ (*daddy went?) [*Age: 3 years*]
6. /aziz xatheh ?/ (*Aziz took it?) [*Age: 5 years and 6 months*]
7. /edeedeh fi almestesfa ?/ (Granny in hospital?) [*Age: 7 years and 6 months*]
8. /rehty 'ny assoq ?/ (*you went to the market without me) ?) [*Age: 7 years and 4 months*]
9. / haya ga:let lech ?/ (*Haya told you?) ?) [*Age: 6 years and 9 months*]
10. /ba:bah ei:s ?/ (*Daddy sleep?) [*Age: 2 years and 6 months*]
11. /sefty almater ?/ (* you saw the rain?) [*Age: 5 years and 10 months*]
12. /sej tag almater ?/ (* really, it rained?) [*Age: 6 years and 9 months*]
13. /babah sefet asfo:r ?/ (Daddy, you saw bird?) ?) [*Age: 2 years and 5 months*]
14. /benro:h almadreseh bekreh ?/ (Are we going to school tomorrow?) [*Age: 6 years*]
15. /betel'ab ko:reh ?/ (Are you going to play football?) [*Age: 6 years and 7 months*]
16. /betl'abeen hebel ?/ (Will you [feminine] play skipping rope? [*Age: 7 years and 4 months*]

17. /beta:kleen ma'a:i: ?/ (Will you [feminine]eat with me?) [*Age: 5 years and 7 months*]
18. /betestreen ly askreem ?/ (Will you buy ice-cream for me? [feminine]) [*Age: 7 years and 2 months*]
19. /betrooh ma'a:neh lal'a:b ?/ (Will you come with us to the playground? [masculine]) [*Age: 6 years and 11 months*]

20. /betsa:'di:ny fy alwa:jib ?/ (Will you help me with the homework? [feminine]) [*Age: 6 years and 10 months*]

21./betal'ab sony ?/ (You [masculine] will play sony?) [*Age: 7 years*]

I.   Equational Sentences:

/'endek eflu:s ?/ (You [masculine] got money?) [*Age: 6 years and 8 months*]
/ 'nedech marywo:l llmdreseh ?/ (You [feminine] got a uniform for school? [*Age: 6 years and 11 months*]

Stage Two: Information Questions:

Interrogatives with questions particles are acquired slightly later than the Yes/ No type of interrogation; but also relatively early. One of the first question particle learned is /wein/ (where) at the age of one year and eleven months, which is used to ask about places of objects. There is also the question particle /weso/ (what) and /men/ (who) which is the child learns when being asked to identify people. /lays/ (why) is also noticed very early at the age of 2 years and 4 months. /meta/ (when) was acquired at a later stage not before the age of 2 years and 10 months, as it could be noticed from example (23) below. At the beginning, question particles are used alone. A gradual development in the rules seems to occur at this stage. The same form of questioning, that is Yes/No questions continued as in Stage one. Some of the examples of this stage are:

1. /enti: wein rehti: alyo:m ?/ (Where did you go today?) [*Age: 7 years and 3 months*]
2. /meta benroh byi:t edaid ?/ (When are we going to Granny?) [*Age: 8 years]*
3. /men ?/ (Who?) {*Child hearing the door bell ringing*} [*Age: 2 years and 3 months*]
4. /lays ma: saryt li: methelham ?/ (Why didn't you buy for me same as them?) [*Age: 7 years and 5 months*]
5. /yemah lays e:di:d sa'reh abyad ?/ (Mummy, why Granny has gray hair?) [*Age: 6 years*]
6. / lays ma:ma:h/ (Why Mum?) [*Age: 2 years and 4 months*]
7. /meta betsao:n li hafelah ?/ (When are you going to have a party for me?) [*Age: 7 years and 1 month*]
8. Child pointing to her toy's place [*Age: 1 year and 11 months*]: /wien ?/ (Where?)
9. /dhabyah wien ?/ (Dhabyah where?) [*Age: 2 years and 1 month*]
10. /yemah wein betro:hi:n ?/ (Mummy, where are you going?) [*Age: 5 years and 9 months*]
11. /yebah 'a:d go:ly wein bensa:fer fy alaja:zeh ?/ (Daddy, tell me where are we travelling in the holiday ?) [*Age: 7 years and 9 months*]
12. /ko:leh wein ?/ [*the first word is pronounced as /ko:reh/ in adults' language*] (* ball where) [*Age: 2 years and 1 month*]
13. /weinh/ (Where is he?) [*Age: 6 years and 7 months*]
14. /weinh wein ra:h ?/ (Where is he, where did he go) [*Age: 8 years*]
15. /wein etso:fo:n ?/ (Where are you looking?) [*Age: 2 years and 5 months*]
16. /men wein saryty elsi:di: ?/ (*from where did you buy the CD?) [*Age: 8 years and 2 months*]
17. /menho 'end alba:b ?/ (Who is at the door?) [*Age: 8 years*]
18. /men yetekalem ?/ (Who is speaking?){on the phone} [*Age: 6 years and 3 months*]
19. /?bsenho sawyti:h ?/ (How did you do it i.e. with what?) [*Age: 7 years and 5*

months]
20. /ebkam <u>s</u>aryty elsi:di: ?/ (*With how much did you buy the CD?) [*Age: 8 years and 2 months*]
21. /kem ha:<u>th</u>eh/ (How much is this) {should be /ebkem ha: eh/}[*Age: 2 years and 1 month*]
22. /wein ana ba:lwneh ?/ (Where is my balloon?) {should be /wein ba:lonti/}[*Age: 2 years and 5 months*]
23. Mother: /meta re<u>h</u>tey elm<u>t</u>a:r ?/ (When did you go to the airport?)
     Child: /erya:l/ (one Ryal) {the answer should be referring to ***time*** but this is an answer to a question with ***How much*** } [*Age: 2 years and 6 months*]

Stage Three: Negative Questions:

Negative interrogation was acquired in a later stage; some examples are mentioned below:

1. /enti: ma: et'rfyi:n ?/ (* You don't know?) [*Age: 5 years and 1 month*]
2. /dhabyeh ma: etsa:'dny lay<u>s</u> ?/ (* Dhabyah doesn't help me, why?) [*Age: 7 years and 2 months*]
3. /enti: ma: sawytyeh lay<u>s</u> ?/ (You didn't do it why?) [*Age: 6 years and 1 month*]
4. /hy ma etxa:f min alleh ?/ (she doesn't afraid of God?) [*Age: 6 years and 8 months*]
5. / ya'ny a<u>h</u>med ma: ey<u>h</u>bny ?/ (* i.e. Ahmed doesn't love me?) [*Age: 6 years*]
6. /mama ma: saweteh?/ (Mummy didn't you do it?) [*Age: 6 years and 4 months*]
7. / mamah ma: gelty ly ?/ (Mummy you didn't tell me) [*Age: 6 years and 6 months*]
8. / yemah lay<u>s</u> ma: 'lamteeny ?/ (Mummy, why you didn't tell me) [*Age: 6 years and 6 months*]
9. /lay<u>s</u> ma: gelt <u>h</u>eg umy ank btesab<u>h</u> gably ?/ (Why didn't you tell Mum that you will take a bath before me?) [*Age: 8 years*]

In this stage (about 5 years old), children learn the stylistic placement of the words in various positions in the sentence and use them with prepositions. This stage can be described as mastery of the adult usage of the interrogative word particles of question.

/<u>h</u>eg men alfesta:n ?/ (For whom is this dress?) [*Age: 7 years and 6 months*]
/ h:<u>th</u>yh ebkam ?/ (How much is this?) [*Age: 6 years and 6 months*]
/men leh eljo:ty ela<u>h</u>mer ?/ (For whom are the red shoes?) [*Age: 7 years*]

IX. DISCUSSION:

Certainly, it is very interesting to know how children acquire these discourse constraints. Language production and language comprehension processes are so complex. People are capable of always producing and comprehending new words, constituents, sentences and texts (Els <u>et al.</u> , 1984:18). Children manage to develop their creative ability (Chomsky, 1959, 1980, 1981, 1986) within a relatively short period of time and almost without explicit information on language.

(Gleitman, 1993:S32-S33) states that "The universality of language is, (…) no quirk or back corner of human mentality but rather one of the central cognitive properties whose possession makes us truly human. It is realistic to regard the language-acquisition task as a complex interaction between the child's innate capacities and the social, cognitive,

and specifically linguistic supports provided in the environment".

Observation has indicated it to be the case in the acquisition of Qatari dialect as well. Our data shows that children generally follow a pattern of hierarchy in terms of accuracy of negative and interrogative production. Another point to observe in the data is that the negative particle /la:/ was used in the early stages. /la:/ was placed before the negated verb (in verbal sentences) or noun (in equational sentences). Omar (1973) in a cross-sectional study, as well as Samdi (1979) in a longitudinal study found the negator /la:/ (in Egyptian and Jordinian Arabic Dialects respectively), the first to be acquired. This is a strong indication that there is universality (systematicity) among children acquiring syntactic structures. The implication is that there are universal processes underlying language acquisition. It is assumed that these processes are closely related to the semantics of the intended meaning of communication.

The children's utterances reflect a continuum of development. By developmental continuum, it is implied the increasing frequency of the introduction of new linguistic forms or the gradual change of the probability of use of particular forms. The movement follows the patterns of increasing complexity. Complexification involves the substitution of *general by more specific rules* when conditions of appropriateness become evident. The General- Specific distinction in negation is exemplified by the overgeneralization of some negative variants. It was found that /la:/ was the most overgeneralized negator. The use of one Negative particle for another indicates the general rules of acquisition of negation, for example * /la:/ to negate sentences.*

Increasing complexity of child language may result from *increasing degrees of analysis of linguistic knowledge*. For example, it was observed that the negative particles were used as unanalysed negative particles at early stages of development. This indicates undifferentiation of the negative particles as tense markers. As semantic complexity increases both in comprehension and production, negative particles reanalysed as:

Type of Sentence :	**Verbal**	**Tense**
Negative Particle:	**/la:/**	**present**
	/ma:/	**past/ present**
	/mob/	**future**

 By posting an inherent order within the QD negation categories, we are, in fact, stating another axiom- that the semantic notions (here Negation) and linguistic manifestations of tense (since the negative particle is a tense marker in QD), while strongly correlated are different from each other. It is possible to suggest a tentative explanation for the early acquisition of /la:/ over the other particles for the correct and appropriate use of that means of negation. Basically, to produce categorical realization of Arabic negation in general, various aspects of acquisition are interacted, e.g. word order development, tense development, negation development and inflection development. By *negation development*, we mean the realization of the correct form of the negative particle (for sentence type) and its placement in the appropriate position in relation to the verb which involves word order development. Tense development indicates the ability to realize negative particles as tense carriers. By inflection development, we mean being able to express number, gender, person and tense.

Another indication of complexity is *inflection.* The acquisition of inflectional morphology has been the subject of numerous studies since Berko (1958). Inflectional morphology is, on the one hand, rule-bound, semantically predictable, obligatory and generally applicable (Bybee 1985; Katamba 1993), and is therefore marked early on in child language (Brown 1973) as in English. However, inflectional systems such as the German noun plural marking are fraught with irregularities, which prevent their early mastery (Clahsen et. al., 1992, Kuczaj 1977). Ravid and Farah, (1999:192) reported that number and gender are marked early on, although mastery of all stem changes takes until age 7-8.

Omar (1973) reported that inflections were the last to be fully acquired and the order of acquisition was found to be determined by their regularity and essentiality of convergence of meaning. It is assumed that a general uninflected main verb (or adjective) is the all-purpose tool. The analysis shows the structural poverty of the negative and interrogative structures in early stages since these stages have no inflection at all, therefore inflections for number, tense, person and gender are not indicated anywhere in the sentence. Increase in complexity means the gradual acquisition of QD negative and interrogative systems as well as the gradual acquisition of inflected forms of verbs, nouns, etc. It also involves knowledge of the underlying grammatical categories and their relationships.

Looking at the data, it seems that the order of interrogative particles from the most to the least favoured are:

i)   *Yes/No Questions (Declarative + intonation)*
ii) *Information Questions*
iii) *Negative Questions*

This is in keeping with the belief that declarative sentences are the easiest sentence type (Brody, 1984).

The analysis shows that child's language is one that is developmental and one that is expanding in complexity from a basic 'semantax' (Traugott, 1977). Abdulkarim and Roeper (1998:43) agree that "semantic accounts exist which claim that part of the data has a semantic explanation." However they also argue "that the acquisition evidence continues to indicate a unified syntactic account." Also they concluded "the intricacy of both syntactic and semantic theories makes it often difficult to determine which part of the syntax/semantic interface is at work.

Hopper and Naremore (1978:58-59) summarize 3 main points in children's syntax development:
1. Children's earliest word combinations are probably a reflection of their semantic structures rather than indication that they know much about syntax.
 2. The first indications of grammatical knowledge can be seen when children begin to apply morphological endings to words.
 3. Later stages of language development reflect the child's increasing competence with syntax.

X. CONCLUION:

The developmental stages of the acquisition of Negation and Interrogation by children native speakers of Qatari Dialect are described in this paper. However, the beginning and end of the developmental stages of structures are not as abrupt as it may appear. They do overlap. According to the developmental stages of negation and interrogation, the children move in successive steps in their acquisition of the linguistic structures. Their progression does not result from conscious learning strategy or from a teaching method devised by their caretakers, but instead a consequence of the human brain's innate capacity (Chomsky, 1959) for learning language.

From the data "rules" were written and these were hypothesized as the representation of the child's internal rules for generating utterances. Although language acquisition is systematic, there are a lot of variabilities in it. Writing grammar, for a "dynamic system" however, is very difficult. Thus, developmental language is possible to be described, but , certainly, not to make strong claims. More research is needed in language acquisition of Arabic dialects as a first language.

APPENDIX

The following phonological transcription* is used in this study:

Consonants   *Description*

b	ب	voiced bilabial stop
t	ت	voiceless alveolar stop
t̲	ط	voiceless 'emphatic' alveolar stop
d	د	voiced alveolar stop

<u>d</u>	ض	voiced 'emphatic' alveolar fricative
k	ك	voiceless velar stop
q	ق	voiceless uvular stop
?	ء	glottal stop
j	ج	voiced palato-alveolar affricate
`	ع	voiced phryngeal fricative
f	ف	voiceless labiodental fricative
th	ث	voiceless dental fricative
<u>th</u>	ذ	voiced dental fricative
dh	ظ	voiced 'emphatic' dental fricative
s	س	voiceless alveolar fricative
s	ص	voiceless 'emphatic' alveolar fricative
z	ز	voiced alveolar fricative
<u>s</u>	ش	voiceless alveolar fricative
x	خ	voiceless uvular fricative
gh	غ	voiced uvular fricative
<u>h</u>	ح	voiceless pharyngeal fricative
h	ه	voiceless laryngeal fricative
r	ر	alveolar trill
l	ل	lateral alveolar
m	م	bilabial nasal
n	ن	alveolar nasal
w	و	bilabial approximant
y	ي	palatal approximate
dz		voiced Plato-alveolar
ch	ج	voiceless palato-alveolar
g	ق	voiced velar stop

Based on Bukshaisha (1985).

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