

Does Early Experience Affect Sound Perception and Production in Speakers with Reduced Language Proficiency?



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Early Language Exposure

Crucial for acquiring native mastery of the phonology of a language and that multilingual exposure results in enhanced phonetic and phonological learning ability even in adulthood.

(Fromkin et al. 1974; Flege 1987; Kovelman et al., 2008).

This study

- We explored the role played by early and late language experience in the language abilities of childhood and novice speakers.
- we compare the Arabic speech production and perception skills of the speakers from these groups to identify any differences.

Predictions

- Early language exposure speakers will display better perception skills compared to novice learners of the same self-reported proficiency level.
- Early language exposure speakers will display more native-like pronunciation compared to novice learners of the same self-reported proficiency level.
- Early language exposure speakers will score higher than novice learners on a childhood slang test covering linguistic terms that are predominantly used with children but not in later Years.
- Performance on non-phonetic/phonological aspects of the language will be similar across the two language groups.

Procedure

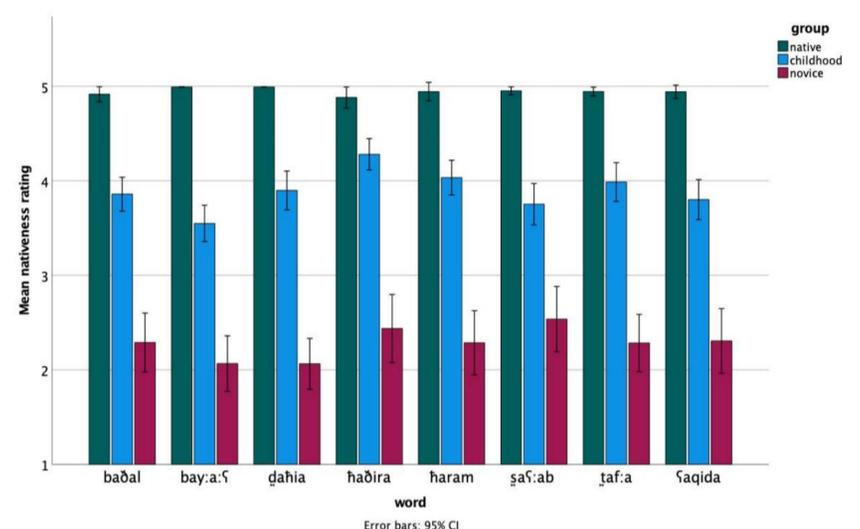
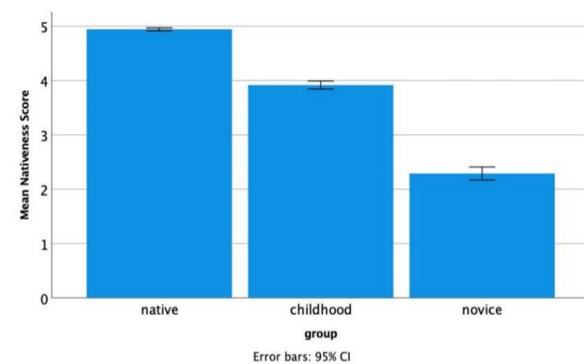
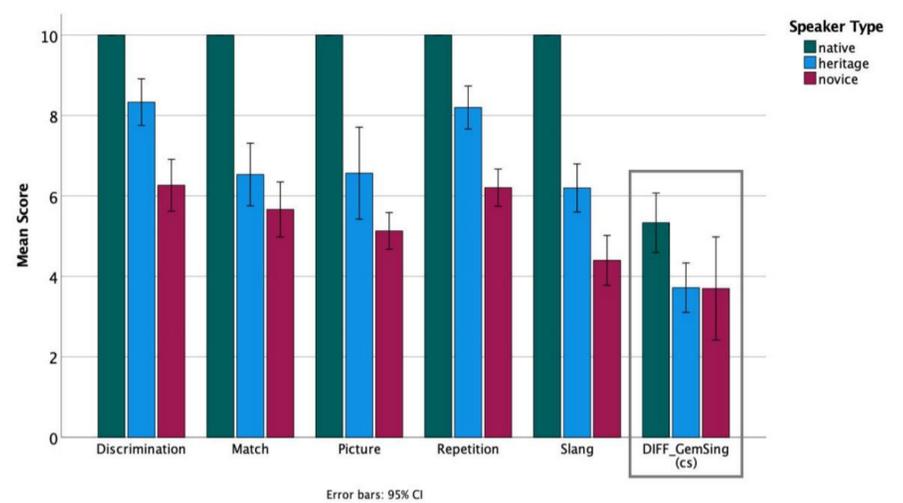
- Language Test.
- Perception Experiment.

Stimuli

- Language Test:**
 - Childhood slang comprehension task: Arabic childhood slang terms, (e.g., /nen-ni/ “refers to sleep”).
 - Picture matching task: utterances containing carrier phrases, (e.g., ana aqul _ alaan)
 - Picture recognition task: pictures of random objects.
 - Picture discrimination task: minimal and near minimal pairs, (e.g., /sadaq/ “he said the truth” and /sad:aq/ “he approved”)
 - Production/repetition task: geminate consonants.
- Perception Experiment:**
 - subsequent of the words used in the production/ repetition task.

Participants

- 15 **native speakers**: individuals who heard and spoke Arabic in their childhood regularly and self-reported speaking it natively.
- 15 **childhood speakers**: individuals who have heard Arabic regularly in their childhood but did not speak it regularly after early childhood and who self-reported intermediate proficiency in the language.
- 15 **novice speakers**: speakers who did not have any exposure to Arabic in their childhood but who are currently enrolled in Arabic language classes in college and self-reported intermediate proficiency in the language.



Conclusion

- Early language experience has measurable long-term benefits for an individual's phonetic and phonological skills even if the language experience diminishes over time.
- Childhood speakers tend to behave more native like and had less accent than novice speakers which clearly had a foreign accent.