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**The Use of Onomatopoeia in Child Language Learning.**  
**It is Useful or Just for Fun?**

This is submitted for partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of master in English language and linguistics.

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## **Dedication**

First and foremost, I would like to thank Allah for His help and guidance throughout my life and studies. My gratitude is extended to my parents, my little daughter, my big family and all who know me.

My special thanks to my husband, Ali, for his help, encouragement and support throughout the process of this research.

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## Abstract

Most of children go from uttering their first words in their first years, to fluent readers and writers of their first language, whereby language skills begin to develop in children's first years, either with the help of adults and peers in environment and home or independently with their mental ability or social interactions. Therefore, this present study attempts to investigate the use of onomatopoeia in child's language learning and its effect on language development of children in which skills of questioning, analysing and synthesising, are encouraged. It aims at finding whether onomatopoeia has an effect on child's language learning which could develop their phonological and morphological patterns. Furthermore, it examines if onomatopoeia could facilitate the child's language learning and how the early productive vocabulary of children could be onomatopoeic which helps them to improve their pronunciation. Hence, it is hypothesised in this paper that the child at an early age perhaps would receive and produce so many words by using onomatopoeic words which became their early productive words in child directed speech. However, to confirm or disconfirm these hypotheses two data collection tools are presented, an interview conducted to caregivers in one of the Algerian communities. Besides observation sessions which include mothers with their children during their reciprocal speech. On the basis of results, onomatopoeia helps most of children to produce letter sounds correctly, to acquire new lexical words, and to develop their listening and speaking skills as well as their cognitive and semantic abilities. Also, their early productive words tend to be onomatopoeic. Therefore, the mimic sounds have an important role in many children's early words acquisition and our society is not as quiet at times as we would like it to be.

**Key words:** Child language development, first language, Onomatopoeia, Early productive words, mimic sounds, listening and speaking skills, cognitive abilities.

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## **List of Abbreviation**

**ZPD.** Zone of Proximal Development.

**LAD.** Language Acquisition Devise.

**LASS.** Language Acquisition Support System.

**IDS.** Infant Directed Speech.

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# **General Introduction**

## **General Introduction**

The prerequisites of language acquisition and language development remain disputable in the field of language studies. However, the precise mechanism of how children grow into competent users of language has always been a difficult question to answer. Regarding language use as a tool of human communication either spoken or written, through this communication sound words may use. The imitative making of words from sounds around the world refers to onomatopoeia. This latter was the first words spoken by humans when language was developed, especially when lead children to acquire new linguistic items.

### **1) Aims of Study**

The current study aims to explore the effect of onomatopoeia in child's language development, and the role of onomatopoeia in child's language learning, phonologically, morphologically, and semantically. The main objectives of this dissertation are the following;

- To investigate the caregivers' attention on the importance of using onomatopoeia in developing child's language before pre-school.
- To carry out the importance of mimic sounds to enhance and improve children's knowledge of their mother tongue.
- To examine the importance of onomatopoeia in early productive words of children.

### **2) Statement of the Problem**

As human beings, it is essential to understand what happens around us specially children who have the curiosity to know everything; starting from the sound words that would be learnt either by imitating or creating them in order to facilitate language learning even in a funny way. The motivation was based on the curiosity to know how these mimic sounds could help the child to learn and have fun at the same time, and also why children love these sounds in the first place. In every family, there are children who need to learn more about their mother tongue and their linguistic development.

### **3) Research Questions**

For the sake of conducting a scientific study properly, the following questions are raised;

- How the early productive vocabulary of children could be onomatopoeic?
- Do these imitative sounds improve the child pronunciation and production of new lexical words?

- Could the mimic sounds facilitate language learning of the child?
- Does onomatopoeia improve language skills and linguistic items of children?

#### **4) Hypothesis**

In order to answer the previous rational in a constructive way, it has been assumed that,

- Perhaps child at early age would receive so many words by using onomatopoeia.
- May onomatopoeia helps children to pronounce, produce sounds and acquire new vocabulary.
- Probably the use of onomatopoeia as a teaching method facilitates learning native language of the child.
- The use of onomatopoeia may improve language skills and linguistic aspects, phonologically grammatically and semantically which children need to be good speakers, listeners and reader at the ensuing ages.

#### **5) Methodology and Research Tools**

Caregivers and mothers have roles in using the imitative sounds, and supporting language skill development. To analyse and achieve this goal, a qualitative approach was used to discuss and analyse data collection by using two different tools. Firstly, an interview was conducted with caregivers, about the use of onomatopoeia in developing child language skills taking place in five kindergartens in the Algerian society. Secondly, observational sessions played a role in taking notes about four mothers and their use of onomatopoeia in directed speech which take place at home. In the realm of findings the interview's replies, and notes may help answer the research questions and confirm the suggested hypotheses.

#### **6) Structure of Thesis**

For many years, researchers and scholars have attempted to solve the mystery of how people acquire their first language and develop their language skills. Numerous theories from a variety of disciplines have been tackling this problem, each one differing from the other. Accordingly, this paper attempt to submit evidence that sound words may lead a child to acquire and develop his language. In the field of this research the content is organised in the following manner.

The first chapter reviews a brief history of the study of signs besides the most prominent theories of language acquisition, firstly, a few key elements from field of linguistics are introduced, mainly a short presentation of semiotics' different views in order to

refer to science of sings. Secondly, learning theories; Behaviourism, Cognitivism and Chomskyan Nativism are delivered from the field of acquiring language, thus, language acquisition has been seen differently from several perspectives behaviourally, social cognitively and psychologically. Thirdly, the social interactionism view has been voted for the role of interactions in social life which lead into the child's language development.

The second chapter deals with onomatopoeia and its effect on language learning, dealing with what onomatopoeia is defined by several researchers and scholars. Furthermore, onomatopoeia as a part of language origin is discussed in different views. Also, how it is regarded as a large proportion to child's learning. In addition, onomatopoeia's distinct purpose as a literary device; in terms of nursery rhymes, children books and poetry. At the end of the chapter, it is introduced as a home activity to help children obtain new knowledge, besides the role of mothers in infant directed speech.

The third chapter's emphasis lies on the practical side of the present study which has to do with data collection, interpretation and analysis. Research method and research tools are present in order to identify research types and materials that used for data collection and analysis. Then, participants and procedures are discussed to clarify both tools used in collect information and participants who were involved in this study. In addition, interpretation of results and findings describe both procedures which used for data collection. Also, findings are discussed in qualitative way, which provide answers for the hypotheses suggested above.

## **Chapter One**

# **Theories of Child Language Learning**

### Introduction

During the past years, there have been different theories of language learning on children, however, any individual is engaged in language processing almost every day in his life. This language takes place in spoken, written and signing process. As well as, the fact that children encompass the ability to learn whichever language system they are introduced to. Learning a language or language acquisition, is something that every child does successfully within a few years. It is the development by which they acquire the ability to produce, perceive and use words to communicate. The linguistic, psychological and sociolinguistic approaches see child's language development differently.

### 1.1. Semiotics in Linguistic View- Saussure and Halliday

#### 1.1.1. The Sessaurean View

Language is one attribute that sets humans apart from all other creatures and binds humans together across all geographic barriers. It can be the great tool for understanding the needs of individuals specially children. Language is studied as science called linguistics which was founded by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand De Saussure in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He defined language in his book "Course in General Linguistics" as: "*the most important of all systems of signs*" (1916, 16). He treats language as social institution which is about signs that intended for communication. And the contribution of de Saussure to modern linguistics is responsible for three key directions in the study of language. He distinguished between synchrony and diachrony, between langue and parole, pragmatic and syntagmatic, between signifier and signified. These two latter aspects were delivered under the semiotic frame work.

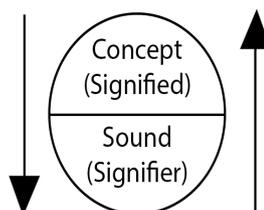
The Swiss linguist and semiotician F. De Saussure designates semiotics as the systematic science of signs, he proved that signs do affect the way we view the world we live in where language was once the way we understood society. (ibid, 1916). In other words, semiology for him is a science which studies the role of signs in social life.

For De Saussure, a sign is the basic unit for communication. The linguistic sign is made up of two part models or of dyadic one. He defined sign as being composed of a concept and sound-image, the concept as the abstract idea of a word and the sound-image is the psychological sensory impression of the sound of a word. It has to do with the sense we get when seeing, hearing or saying a word. (figure1)

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Saussure describes later on these two models as signified (concept) and signifier (sound-image). They seem to be as inseparable components, like two sides of piece of a paper. The relationship between them is arbitrary and Saussure called it “*unmotivated*”. (Saussure, 69). Namely, any sound-image can conceivably be used to signify a particular concept and he called it unmotivated because there is no detectable relation between sound and meaning because meaning is value for him. He sees meaning structural or relational rather than referential that is everything in language system depends on relations.

Saussure uses his favourite example to demonstrate this dyadic model. For him, “*one tends to forget that arbour is called a sign only because it carries the concept “tree” the idea of the sensory part implies the idea of the whole.*” (Saussure,1916, p.67). He means that, the relation is arbitrary by which the concept tree does not occurred with its signifier “/t/ /r/ /i/”, as evidenced by the fact that it is expressed differently in other languages such as in Arabic “شجرة” (*chadjara*), and in French “arbre” and so on.



**Figure1.** Saussure's model of the sign (1916,p 66)

The arbitrariness of linguistic sign is a radical concept because it proposes the autonomy of language in relation to reality.

*The arbitrary aspect of signs does help to account for the scope for their interpretation (and the importance of context). There is no one-to-one link between signifier and signified; signs have multiple rather than single meanings. Within a single language, one signifier may refer to many signifieds (e.g. puns) and one signified may be referred to by many signifiers (e.g. synonyms)[...] Onomatopoeic words are often mentioned in this context, though some semioticians retort that this hardly accounts for the variability between different languages in their words for the same sounds (notably the sounds made by familiar animals. ( Saussure 1983, 69; Saussure 1974, 69) ” as cited by Chandler, 1994.*

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That is to say, there is not a natural relationship between a word and the object it refers to, hence a word is only available to acquire a new meaning if it is identifiably different from all the other words in the language and it has no existing meaning. In addition, John Lyons argued that “*the most obvious instance of arbitrariness in language-and the one that is most frequently mentioned- has to do with the link between the form and meaning, between the signal and message.*”(1981:19). In other words, the arbitrary quality makes languages more difficult to learn, but it also gives them great flexibility and adaptability and there is a non-arbitrary connection between form and meaning in languages it referred to as onomatopoeia.

Accordingly, Saussure introduces also, two major concepts – langue and parole. States that “*It is not to be confused with human speech [langage], of which it is only a definite part, though certainly an essential one*”. (1916, p 9). Here it means that, langue and parole are parts of human speech “language”, whereby langue is an underlying system that is common in speech or utterance, it is like a social rule-governed system rather than parole which is about the individual speech acts. In addition to the other dichotomies that presented by De Saussure, all of them are related to the language study under the structuralism view.

### 1.1.2. Semiotics in Relation to Mac Halliday

A number of scholars and linguists other than Saussure have worked within the semiotic framework. One of those linguists is named Michael Halliday who pointed another view about semiotics’ role in language development. He described a sign as meaning and he reacted against structuralist Sessaurean view (F. De Saussure, langue and parole), due to his studies with J. Firth who proclaimed a monistic approach to linguistics. He is only satisfied with the whole man; thing and action as whole. The language as social referential and potential meaning not language as a system. Halliday’s view refers to the experiential function of language. His own case study of children development showed that before the emergence of mother tongue, the child is able to perform a number of communicative functions, using what has become known in linguistics as protolanguage or protoconversation (prosemeiosis) to express meaning. Halliday pointed out that the infant from 9 to 15 months of age, the early function was interpersonal such as getting people to do things, greeting them, expressing pleasure, demanding attention or satisfaction of bodily needs and so on. (Mac.Halliday ,1975,p.148-155).

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He identified several functions of protolanguage. There were seven micro functions; he called them the instrumental, regulatory, interactional, personal, heuristic, imaginative and informative functions, he added that the child with his preverbal language wants to express particular desires and intentions. Halliday devoted this explanation of these functions:

- The instrumental function is to obtain goods and services. The “I want function”.
- The regulatory function is to control the behaviour of child. The “do as I tell you function”, which aims to manipulate others.
- The interactional function is to interact with others, exchanging of attention. The “me and you function”.
- The personal function is to express the personality of the child; it enables the child to communicate his affective states. The “here I come”.
- The heuristic function is to explore and learn about environment. The “tell me why function”.
- The imaginative function is to create the child’s own environment, it enables child to pretend. The “let’s pretend function”.
- The informative function is about the “I have something to tell you function”.

Namely, the child does not use words yet, but express his ideas and intentions thanks to his systemised sign system, that is associated with his brain and body development on order to realise the purposive nature of communication. Mac Halliday works based on his observation to his child’s development named Nigel. He noticed that sounds he heard from his son are not sounds that heard outside; he sees the development of language as taking place in social context, as he states; “*Child begins by creating protolanguage of his own, a meaning potential, a respect of each of social function that constitute his developmental semiotic*”. (Mac.Halliday,1978; p.124). It means that, the child is using protolanguage to build meaning as he builds language from meaningful experiences through learning to distinguish when and how language plays in reality. Halliday believed that children are driven to expand meaning potential in order to achieve more through language. Also, he sees the development of language as follow,

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*We can gain a coherent picture of the child's early semiotic development: how children are steadily increasing the number of 'semogenic vectors,' the various parameters that open up the total potential for meaning. First, they tease apart the content from expression; then they separate the system from the instance; then they open up further strata, further levels of organization within the content and within the expression; then they prise apart the distinct functional components inside each new stratum. With each step, they are opening up a new domain in which to move, so construing a multidimensional semiotic space analogous to the increasing dimensionality of the bodily space in which their material existence is located. (ibid 2003, pg. 14).*

Here, Halliday connects the language (development of meaning) with the development of body, and other child's potential for meaning expand as the expanding of his environmental interaction. The body, the brain and environment shape the child's semiotic behaviour or meaning potential, through time child language development becomes more complex situation and his social needs grow asking for more.

Halliday noticed that child moves into mother tongue through two other stages that differ from the protolanguage stage, it is the transitional stage which the child reaches. Children use grammatical structures but not as advanced as the next stage (adult language). Their words begin to take on multifunctional properties. They also gain the use of dialogue. This part of the stage is about adopting assigning and then accepting or rejecting roles given to them. Children move out of this phase when they have understood the principles of grammar and dialogue i.e. that a child becomes a speaker in the third stage. (ibid, 2003).

In consequence, Halliday sees the development of language as taking place in a social context, through interaction rather than the outcome of some biological innate process, and that humans are creatures who need to mean some things and language above all else, is our primary sources for conveying meaning.

Several scholars studied the development of language and it was the main debatable term through time. Some of them see it as a structured system and others see it as a meaning study and many of them have a distinctive view about how language is acquired or how it would be learned.

### **1.2. Acquiring Native Language –Several Perspectives**

Throughout the life span, the development starts from infancy until an old age. Childhood is a time for enormous change, but people also continue to grow slowly and develop during adulthood. It is a continuous process with predictable sequence. These

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developmental changes may be influenced by a genetic factor (something biological), environment and maturation, as well as, language in its basic form it is used to communicate our needs and wants. It encompasses a range of modes of delivery. As child or infant needs this tool to express his ideas, needs and intentions. There are some basic theories advanced to describe how first language is acquired and learned.

### 1.2.1. Behaviourism

*“Infants learn oral language from other human role models through a process involving imitation, rewards and practice. Human role models in an infant environment provide the stimuli and rewards.”* (Cooter and Rutzel, 2004)<sup>1</sup>. It is believed that when child attempts oral language or imitates the sounds or speech patterns, they are usually praised and given affection for their efforts. Behaviourist Theory is basically a psychological theory in its essence. It is a learning theory that focuses on observable behaviour, and describes how all learning and behaviours are directly correlated with environmental stimuli, advanced in part as a reaction to traditional grammar. The main supporters of this theory were Ivan Pavlov (1849-1936) who investigated The Classical Conditioning and Bloomfield Skinner who developed The Operant Conditioning Theory. Behaviourist theory discounts the mental processes and relates the learning concept with environment and observation. It claims that humans are born with a blank slate or “Tabula Raza”.

According to Pavlov’s experiment<sup>2</sup> indicates that stimulus and response work together. Children at an early age (babies) obtain native language by babbling, which resembles the appropriate words repeated by individuals or objects near them. So for their babblings and mutterings they are rewarded. This very reward reinforces further articulations of the same sort into grouping of syllables and words in a similar situation. In this way, child goes on emitting sounds, groups of sounds, then as he grows up, he combines the sentences via generalisations and analogy<sup>3</sup> which in some complicated cases, condition him to commit errors by articulating in permissible structures in speech. This theory has to do with The Habit Formation Theory of language learning and teaching, reminding us the learning of structural grammar learning.

Furthermore, Pavlov’s book (1927,p.33-35), presented Classical Conditioning experiment that is built in reflexes. He dealt with his dogs that were connected to a machine which collected saliva. In his book he wrote about the experiment when his dogs responded to

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<sup>1</sup> <http://languagecritique.weebly.com/theoretical-ideas.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Dog Salivation Experiment.

<sup>3</sup> For example ; \*goed for went , \*doed for did and so on.

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the opened door, and food is coming, here the food is an un-conditioning stimulus and salivate is an un-conditioning response. The sound of the opened door is called neutral stimulus. After several repetitions the neutral stimulus by itself would extract the response. This point of neutral stimulus renamed conditioned stimulus and response called conditioned response. Therefore, Pavlov experiment was generalised to humans which operates the principle of stimulus response in order to investigating and formulating hypothesis underlying both language and behaviour, assuming that language is acquired by the same principle by conditioning, repetition, reinforcement and imitation.

Other than Pavlov, Skinner's theory sees language as another behaviour of humans and patterns, and that language is learned through the habit process. His theory pointed that children mimic the sounds and patterns they hear around them through imitation and repetition. In this theory, Skinner believed that language is a set of verbal behaviours learned through operant conditioning, and learning can occur from reinforcement and imitation of others and prompting and shaping.

In addition, Skinner developed the idea of operant conditioning advancing that children receive "rewards" for using language in a functional manner. For instance, child learns to say "drink" when he/she is thirsty, and she/he receives something to drink, which reinforces the use of the word for getting a drink, and thus the child will continue to do so. This follows the four-term contingency that skinner believed was the basis of language development, and it includes, motivating operations, discriminative stimuli, response and reinforcing stimuli. (Elizabeth G, 2017).

Namely, Skinner produced a behaviourist account of language acquisition in which linguistic utterances served as a conditioning stimulus and conditioning response. Also, behaviourists see learning as the establishment of habits as the result of reinforcement and reward. In a stimulus situation, a response is exerted, and if the response is positively augmented by a reward, then the association between the stimulus and response is itself reinforced, and thus, the response will very likely be manipulated by every appearance of stimulus. The result will yield conditioning (Mergel, 1998). Therefore, positive reinforcement is reward while negative reinforcement is punishment and when responses to stimuli are coherently reinforced, then habit formation is established. It is because of this fact that this theory is termed habit formation by reinforcement theory.

In addition, when language acquisition is taken into consideration, the theory suggested that both first and second languages receive linguistic input from speakers in their

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environment and positive reinforcement for their correct repetition and imitations. Regarding imitation the learner's response is reinforced positively when they acquire the language relatively easily.

It is clear that language learning and its development, for the behaviourists, is a matter of conditioning by means of imitation, practice, reinforcement, and habituation, which constitute the paces of language acquisition. Whilst others criticize this idea by declaring that behaviourism does not account all kinds of learning since it disregards the activities of the mind. Also, behaviourists do not explain the recognition of new language patterns by young children for which there is no reinforcement mechanism.

### 1.2.2. Cognitive Theory of Language Learning-Piaget vs. Vygotsky

Cognitive theory or Cognitivism is the theory that studied learning process that occurs within the learners' mind regarding their developing. As Mergel.B,(1998) defined it, cognitive theory is based on thought process behind the behaviour. It means here that the theory occurs inside the learner's mind consciously. Several theorists dealt with this theory; however, the main one that will be introduced was J. Piaget (1896-1980)<sup>4</sup> who worked on the theory of cognitive development of children through exploration with activities in their environment. Whilst, Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934)<sup>5</sup> relates his view of child's development to the social and cultural experiences.

Cognitive Development Theory focuses on predictable cognitive (thinking) stages. Piaget assumes that thinking differs from one stage to another, and his theory includes and explains how children perceive, think, understand, and learn about their environment. In other words, it explained mental operations of a child. He noticed that children naturally search for unknown terms and begin to understand things, i.e. children construct their knowledge gradually through activities and participants in real life experiences. There were several processes and concepts were introduced by Piaget which occurs during each stage of development. These concepts were schemata, assimilation, accommodation and adaptation respectively.

Firstly, schemata as Piaget, 1952 defined it: "*a cohesive, repeatable action sequence possessing component actions that are tightly interconnected and governed by a core meaning.*" as cited by Mc.Leod.S.A.(2015). It means that schemata is like an organising

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<sup>4</sup> <http://psychohawks.wordpress.com/2010/09/05/theoriesofcognitivedevelopment-JeanPiaget.com>

<sup>5</sup> <http://psychohawks.wordpress.com/2010/09/05/theoriesofcognitivedevelopment-Levvvygotsky.com>

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knowledge, it is about cognitive structures represent a certain aspect of the world, a mental representation and concepts. Children receive new information and recognize their schema. Secondly, assimilation is the process of taking new information and adding it to pre-existing one. Piaget took “dog” as an example; the household has a small west highland white terrier as dog. Schema might be small, furry, four legs, etc. When a child interacts with new dog perhaps (big, gold, smooth), here the child assimilated the Labrador’s information into the old dog schema. Thirdly, accommodation is adjusting what is already known to fit the new information. For instance, the example of “dog” again, a child’s schema of a dog is “furry, four legs, small, etc.” When a child sees a similar animal, a cat for example, he already says “look dog!” but actually it is not a dog Here child would absorb new information that all four legs and furry animals are dogs and cats too. Fourthly, adaptation has to do with the recognition of what children perceive mentally in the environment. It occurs both assimilation and accommodation.

According to Piaget’s theory of cognitive development, children’s minds move throughout four stages which reflect the increasing sophistication of their thought. Each child goes through the stages in the same order, and child development is determined by biological maturation and interaction with the real life and environment. The four stages shaped by Piaget are mentioned as follows, as cited by Mc.Leod.S.A.2015.

### **1. Sensorimotor stage: birth –two years of age**

During this stage the infant perceives and acquires knowledge through sensory experiences, senses and manipulation objects. In this stage, only senses and motor abilities are used to do so. Behavioural actions of babies, such as sucking, hitting, crying and grasping help them to learn about their surroundings. Hence children begin to learn that objects still exist even when they are out of sight. The infant here learns new concepts through experiments and exploration.

### **2. Preoperational stage: two-seven years of age**

In this stage, infants are very egocentric, and they see the world in relation to one self only. This means that they see the world the same way they want. During this period, a child is not able to see other’s point of view. Children tend to symbolised things at this age, for example, a young girl uses her finger to represent a baby bottle when she plays with a doll. Also, there is another feature called conservation, where children are able to distinguish between size and volume. For instance, the use of a beaker of water one is short and fat and the second is tall and thin, but both have an equal quantity whereby the

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child recognizes the size and he would conclude that the tall beaker has more than the other one.

### 3. Concrete operational stage: seven-eleven years of age

Kids at this point of development begin to think logically and understand others' points of view. Also, they tend to struggle with abstract and hypothetical concepts.

### 4. Formal operational stage: eleven-Adult age

Individuals have the ability to understand abstract ideas. Things are more reasonable and logical and they are able to solve problems. During this stage young people developed their capacities as an adult does.

Piaget asserted that there is qualitative change in how children think as they progress gradually through these four stages, while these stages of cognitive development reflected the increasing of children's thought. A child of seven years old does not only search for obtaining information as a child of two years does, he would search for getting more. There is a fundamental change in the way of thinking about the world too.

Other than Piaget's thinking and view about development of children, there is another theorist who takes the social cultural aspect to support his theory. Lev Vygotsky assumes that children learn through social and cultural experiences. Vygotsky argued: "*learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organised, specifically human psychological function.*" (1978, 90). In other word, the social community plays a role in children's thinking development. Interaction with others facilitates the learning of customs, values, language and their culture too. According to him, kids learned the rules of social interactions through playing i.e. when a child plays he/she is in a constant dialogue either with self or with others. Also, for them a language is the main tool of thought and for obtaining their knowledge from social community and in developing their intellectual abilities.

Vygotsky was particularly interested in the importance of culture and language on one's cognitive development, specifically, children. Given that language is vital to human interactions, he believed that language was the most important tool that human could utilize. Language, especially in the realm of collaborative dialogue, is the way the most knowledgeable than other communications important information to a child. Vygotsky

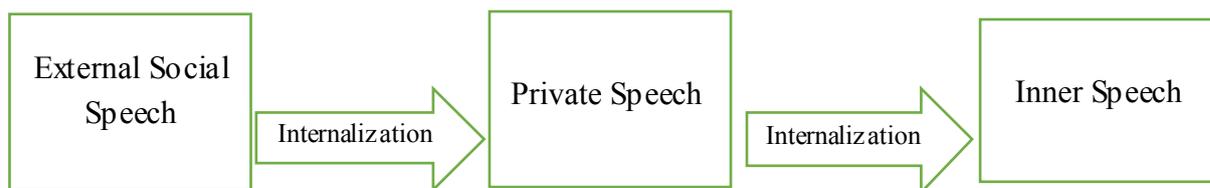
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believed that there are three forms of language, social speech “external speech”, private speech “egocentric speech” and inner speech “internal speech”. (1987, Vygotsky)<sup>6</sup>. Figure2,

Social speech is what Vygotsky refers to as the external communication that people use to talk with other people, and he believed that this form of language was typical in children from the age of two. Next, private one is referred to as an internal communication that a person directs to themselves. It serves an intellectual function, and it is typical in children from the age of three. While the inner speech deals with what happens when private speech diminishes in its audibility until it becomes a self-regulating function. He believes this is typical in children from the age of seven. Vygotsky’s focus on language as a part of cognitive development is based on the idea that at the beginning of a child’s life, language and thought begin as separate systems within a child’s brain. He believes that thought and speech (language) are independent systems; thought becomes verbal while speech becomes representational. Lev.Vygotsky says that;

*Inner speech is not the interior aspect of external speech, it is a function in itself. It still remains speech i.e. thought connected words. But while in external speech thought is embodied in words in inner speech words dies as they bring forth thought. Inner speech is to a large extent thinking in pure meanings.*  
(1962:149.)

Therefore, child’s communication can be internalized to become private speech to the self, and this internalization of language is an important component to a child’s cognitive development, and “private speech is typically defined in contrast to social speech, as speech addressed to the self (not to others) for the purpose of self-regulation (rather than communication)”. (Diaz et al. 1992. P62). That is to say, private speech is the moment in a child’s development where thoughts become connected with words, and a child begins exhibiting verbal thinking. Whereas, social interaction is an important part of cognitive development as a child learns from a more knowledgeable other, private speech allows a child to begin the collaborative process of learning with himself.



**Figure 2.** Vygotsky’s development of inner speech.

<sup>6</sup> <http://psychohawks.wordpress.com/2010/09/05/theoriesofcognitivedevelopment-Levvygotsky.com>.

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Vygotsky was interested in his contribution; Zone of Proximal Development<sup>7</sup> from a sociocultural perspective. This concept presents learning as scale which occurs in this zone. Lev.Vygotsky presents this idea of ZPD to cover the gap between the present and potential development levels. He states that; “*what we call the zone of proximal development is a distance between the actual development level and determined by individual problem solving and the level development as determined through problem solving under guidance or in collaboration with capable peers*” (Lev.Vygotsky,1978,p.86). He meant that, the child is able to do tasks and accomplish his knowledge with the help of others, under guidance of adults, also he described that the child is capable of doing tasks without any help and support of others and he is able to solve problems independently. For him, ZPD is the area where the most sensitive instructions or guidance should be given, allowing the child to develop skills they would to use by themselves, and develop higher mental functions. Vygotsky’s view has to do with the cooperative or guided learning related to the support that lets child accomplish a task that he/she cannot accomplish independently, it usually done by teachers, peers, etc. It helps the child to develop the skills necessary to communicate on their own.

In short, both of Piaget and Vygotsky provide insight into children’s cognitive development, but each one of them has a different view. Piaget’s theory focuses on the progression of children in different stages at the end of which they achieve maturation. Whereas, Vygotsky gives importance to the influence that culture and language has on the cognition development of children, whereby, his theory is part of social interaction which does not contradict the ideas of behavioural and innate theories about language learning.

### 1.2.3. Nativist View of Language Learning

Several theories regarding the language development discussed its learning and acquisition issue. A few decades ago, the issue of what extent language may be innate in humans was proposed by Noam Chomsky “the innateness hypothesis”. He suggests that language is an innate faculty, and children have innate abilities to learn a language. Chomsky terms this innate ability the “language acquisition device.”<sup>8</sup> This latter equipped in the human’s brain at birth with specific grammatical rules and principles. This innate grammar built the child’s language development. Chomsky said that; “*how do we come to have such rich and specific knowledge, or such intricate systems of belief and understanding, when the*

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<sup>7</sup> Zone of Proximal Development henceforth ZPD.

<sup>8</sup> Language Acquisition Device henceforth LAD.

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*evidence available to us is so meager?"* (Cook.V.1988. p369). Namely, language acquisition would be difficult without an innate grammar and individuals instinctively learn language without any formal instruction, whereby they a natural need to use language, and that in the absence of formal language children will develop a system of communication to meet their needs. He has observed that all children make the same type of language errors; regardless of the language they are taught. This LAD means a hypothesised innate mental faculty present in infants that enables them to construct and internalised grammar of their native language.

According to the Chomskyan view, children do not simply copy the language that they hear around them. They deduce rules from it, which they can then use to produce sentences that they have never heard before. (N.Chomsky,1965,p3). It means that, children do not learn a repertoire of phrases and sayings, as the behaviourists believe, but a grammar that generates an infinite number of new sentences.

Chomsky also believes in the existence of a "universal grammar," which posits that children use to get a grasp of the language in their environment and apply it in their native language. *"It is based on the idea that all languages have the same ancestor and that the grammar of all natural languages share the basic aspects of grammar"*. (O'Grady et al,2011, as cited by Bryndis Samueldottir,2015, p4). It means that, there are certain grammatical rules all human languages share, and that the theoretical basis of universal grammar is founded on the assumption that there is a deep level of similarity contained within all human languages given that each human language is governed by a set of comparable constraints.

Chomsky pointed out another argument called poverty of stimulus (POTS) hypothesis. He asserted that;

*It seems that a child must have the ability to invent a generative grammar that defines well-form edness and assigns interpretations to sentences even though the primacy linguistic data that he uses as a basis for this act of theory construction may, from the point of view of the theory he constructs, be deficient in various respects"*. (N.Chomsky,1965, p201).

That is to say, the linguistic data that heard by a child do not contain enough information to the grammar use to produce them, in addition this hypothesis suggests that children could not be capable of acquiring such a profound system of communication by simple imitation or social interaction without any pre-existing faculties, because their caregivers do not provide them with sufficient data to learn all the complexities of lan guage.

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To sum up, this theory views that children born with an innate capacity to discover for themselves the underlying rules of a language system on the basis of the samples of natural language they are exposed to, and their acquisition for grammatical rules is guided by principles of an innate universal grammar which could to apply all languages.

### 1.3. Sociolinguistics and Language Input- Bruner vs. Chomsky

Children acquiring their first language through the established cognitive structures, which are stimulated by environmental input, whereby language input can be seen both from the linguistic perspective and from the actual language in child's environment. Through communication, children gain the social knowledge, either with their parents or caregivers. As Ely and Gleason, 1996 claimed that;

*Primarily, parents direct the child's behaviour by praising or prohibiting their activity. Secondly, parents both use and encourage "decontextualized language", i.e. "the use of abstract and metaphorical language, and parental involvement in children's emergent literacy. (p.257).*

Namely, both of them relate the influence of socialization of language to parents, by which the infant has a directed speech with his father and mother. The language input can be seen as one important social factor of a child's language acquisition, an essential aspect of sociolinguistics, which is "*the study of the way language varies in relation to social situations*" (Crystal, 1976, p. 28). Therefore, that language input would be a specific directed speech to the infant in the role of social factor.

According to nativist approach as mentioned before with Chomsky, humans are genetically able to acquire knowledge with a capacity occurred in humans 'mind, called LAD. "*...That are determined by the "language faculty", which is understood to be a particular component of the human mind [...]. One may think of this faculty as a "Language Acquisition Device", an innate component of the human mind.*" (N.Chomsky.,1986, p3). In other word, his hypothesis of language acquisition maintains that every child has an innate capacity for first language acquisition. Moreover, Radford, 2004, asserted that; "*which provides children with a genetically transmitted algorithm (i.e. set of procedures) for developing grammar, on the basis of their linguistic experience (i.e. on the basis of the speech input they receive).*" (p.6). Therefore, children experiences of first language serves as an input to the inherent LAD, which enables the output of the process, grammar of the language, and the child's speech.

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In addition, Jerome Bruner suggested an opposing argument, in which it is claimed that in order to encourage language acquisition, all children need a socially provided support network, a phenomenon termed Language Acquisition Support System<sup>9</sup>. He claims that LAD only works due to the presence of LASS “*provided by the social world that is matched to LAD in some regular way*” (Bruner, 1983, p. 77). Namely, this support system, however, is associated with innate, biologically acquired abilities, also it consists of the social environment in which children thrive from day to day, where their caregivers construct their own behaviour around the child’s needs. In J. Bruner’s own words, he says;

*That format, initially under the control of the adult, provides a Language Acquisition Support System, LASS. It frames or structures the input of language and interaction in the child’s Language Acquisition Device in manner to “make the system function”. In a word, it is the interaction between LAD and LASS that makes it possible for infant to enter the linguistic community-and, at the same time, the culture to which the language gives access. (1983, p19).*

That is to mean, this LASS refers to the importance of child’s social support network, which works in conjunction with innate mechanisms to encourage and suppress language development, because in social environment caregivers may help to construct the child developmental needs.

In the early children’s first years, they are exposed to language used and constructed by their parents which is, in effect, highly altered from their conventional language. This self-developed speech is extremely simplified in vocabulary, grammar, sentence length and sound of voice. This specific type of speech is generally called “motherese”. Crystal, (1976) describes this as an ideal learning environment as children “*find themselves in contact with native speakers of the language who are on hand twenty four hours a day, who respond to their every noise, and continually talk to them in short, simple, repetitive sentences*” (p. 53). It means that, the motherese takes place in the form of communication, and the child may respond to the mother’s talk with sounds and noises. Additionally, motherese is much like Child Directed Speech “CDS” based on social interactions which represented by Catherine Snow who claims that; “*mothers actively and intensively teach language in the home.*” (quoted by Moerk, 1976, p15). In other word, children do not independently absorb their first language from the environment, and during activities in which pre-linguistic children engage

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<sup>9</sup> Language Acquisition Support System henceforth LASS

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with their parents, social interaction takes place, which has been argued to influence early lexical development.

Numerous studies have shown that early lexical development is influenced by the social experiences of the child because the child's first words are usually uttered in social-interactive routines where the role of the adult and the child are clearly structured. Barrett (1996) further explains: "*Particular linguistic forms tend to be produced by the adult at predictable points in the sequences of actions which make up these interactional formats.*" (p. 390). He means that, the caregivers' speech may not correlate to the pace of the child's lexical development. While linguistic input may have a crucial role in establishing initial use of words. Nevertheless, results from a variety of studies explicitly foreground that frequency of 'motherese' and repetitive exposure to words are interconnected factors of the language acquisition process. Fletcher & Mac Whinney (1996) worked on the grammatical development under the socialization language. While Ochs & Scheffelin (1996), offered a discourse research from the language socialization perspective in which the model for grammatical development "*takes an informed look at ideology and social order as forces that organize children's use and comprehension of grammatical forms*" (p.73). Therefore, a child's grammatical development can be seen as a result of sociocultural contexts where the child is an active participant in social events, where language is held highly and language learning is encouraged.

To conclude, the precise mechanism of how children, grow into competent users of language have always been a difficult question to answer. Researchers and intellectuals from a variety of disciplines have been tackling this problem. As it has been seen some scholars describe the ability of acquiring a language is genetically inherited skill, others believe that language is learned following birth and it is due to environmental factors. This is part of nature and nurture debate. On one hand, the nurture view was presented by behaviourist theory by which children that acquire language from habit formation seem to memorize certain structures prematurely. It is all about the environment stimulation which is the most important factor in first language acquisition for children. On the other hand, nature approach has given a special case of genie and the experience factor in language acquisition. According to this approach, all children are born with an instinctive mental capacity that allows them to both learn and produce language.

### Conclusion

Most of all what researchers do know is that the interaction between heredity and environment, “nature and nurture” is often the most important factor of all. Whereas, the social environment may seem to be the most important factor in a child’s language development in someone’s view and language activities taken at home and school environment seem to take various forms, and specific activity patterns may be detected, such as, onomatopoeia at early childhood and preschool. This aspect will be discussed in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Two**

# **Onomatopoeia and its Effect on Language Learning**

### Introduction

All human beings need and search for communication in order to express their desires and intentions. Virtually, every human faculty engages with imitation, “sound imitation”. During the primitive time, humans have expressed their communication using sound words. And one of the most natural and unexplored objects for the study of the mimetic elements or sounds in language is the onomatopoeia aspect which has been discussed over thousands of years, defining across a linguistic view then as an element of language origin. This term is seen also as a literary device which helps either to develop the child’s language skills or to facilitate the early production of words even in a funny way.

### 2.1. The Issue of Onomatopoeia

#### 2.1.1. Definition of Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is a phenomenon of a particular interest for many researchers; hence, there are various definitions of it. The broadest definition of onomatopoeia refers to the imitative making of words from natural sounds, and it is said that this phenomenon is commonly found in all languages of the world. However, sometimes sound imitations are often similar, and onomatopoeia in its manifestations is different in different languages. It is defined as follows according to Merriam Webster dictionary;

Onomatopoeia: noun *on·o·mato·poe·ia* \,ā-nə-, mā-tə-'pē-ə, -, ma-\

- 1: the naming of a thing or action by a vocal imitation of the sound associated with it (as buzz, hiss)
- 2: the use of words whose sound suggests the sense a study of the poet's onomatopoeia.

According to Rosental (1976), Onomatopoeia (or sound imitation) is a group of words that reproduce sounds of nature or animals (woof-woof, mew-mew, cookery-doo) and also creating verbs for imitating particular sounds (to bark, to roar). Besides, the definition of Voronin.S.V (2004) includes that the notion of onomatopoeia is not only imitation of animals’ sounds, but some other spheres as well. That is why the author also includes the imitation of humans (laughter, whisper).

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Furthermore, its Greek root presents onomatopoeia as (onoma), a name or word from natural sound and (poiein) which means to make<sup>1</sup>. Simply, it means name-making. Some linguists in fact believed that onomatopes were the first words spoken by humans when language was developing. It had been classified into two types, direct and indirect one by I.R. Galperin who sees it as the formation of words (sound imitation).

Direct onomatopoeia is about creating a word that imitate particular sounds “natural ones”, as ding-dong, burr, bang, cuckoo. Such sound-imitating words are also called “sound metaphors of the language” as they create an image that is not visual (which is the purpose of a lexical metaphor) but acoustic. Indirect onomatopoeia has to do with what makes the sound; reproducing it by a combination of particular phonemes. This type of sound imitation is a form of alliteration: phonemes in words create a certain effect of imitation and make up an individual author’s style. (Galperin, 1981,73-81). Therefore, onomatopoeic words can be used in a transferred meaning and can be like an echo-writing to achieve a literary genre. In addition, Petkova Z.A. (2011) suggests that onomatopoeia should be classified into four main groups;

1. imitating the sounds of animals, birds, insects (oink-oink, woof-woof).
2. imitating the sounds of nature (pit-pat, glug-glug).
3. imitating the sounds of inanimate objects (ding-dong, ping-pong).
4. imitating the sounds of humans (ha-ha, ahchoo). (P154).

Another linguist named Anderson in his book “Grammar of Iconism (1998)” sees onomatopoeia as a set of objections, and listed these objections on the linguistic grounds:

1. Onomatopes are conventional signs, not imitative echoes.
2. Even if onomatopes are imitative, they are not non-arbitrary.
3. Onomatopes exist on the margin of language, not as part of language.
4. Onomatopes do not accurately imitate natural sounds. (p.129).

Here Anderson points out that the ability of humans to mimic sounds is limited by the phonological system and the structure of the human vocal tract. Therefore, an exact imitation of natural sounds by human is not possible, and the last objection cannot be used to prove that onomatopes are merely conventional. Moreover, since onomatopes are controlled by the

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<sup>1</sup> Online Etymology Dictionary <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=onomatopoeia>

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phonological systems of different languages, they can only be partial imitation of natural sounds. However, it does not naturally follow that onomatopoeies are conventional and arbitrary. For him, onomatopoeia is a kind of iconism, and iconism only requires a partial resemblance of the referent.(Anderson 1998).

Others, such as, Al-Azzam (2005) have defined onomatopoeic expressions as those whose sounds mimic “a sound occurring in the real world” ,such as, “miaow”, “hiccup” and “burp” (p.122). In the Arabic language, there also exists a rich stock of such melodic words for instances "زقزقة" و "مواء"<sup>2</sup>. In fact, a deeper look into Arabic onomatopoeia has revealed some interesting issues surrounding their usage. Clearly, mimetic or non-mimetic sounds were increasingly becoming more complex in the infant’s first language acquisition over time and among scholars.

### 2.2. Onomatopoeia as a Theory of Origin of Language

Language is what makes humans human. Through it, they express and communicate their feelings, ideas, wishes and their cultural transmission. However, some believe that language is a divine gift given to humans by God, while others argue that language is simply the product of many years of natural selection, and its use developed through time. Many theorists and scholars asked about the notion and the origin of language in addition to the myths and legends. Despite all these assumptions some linguists present four main onomatopoeic theories which have been discussed in the connection with the problem of the origin of language.

#### a) The Bow-Wow Theory

“...to the effect that men began to speak by imitating the natural sounds they heard, or thought they heard, around them...” (Pei,15, 20) as cited by Stanley Rice (1976). It founded on the idea that human language and vocabulary originated as a form of imitation. In other words, this theory suggests that speech was invented by attempting to imitate the characteristic sound of the thing referred to. It is said that language came from the imitation of animal sounds. For instance, the characteristic that differentiates a dog from other creatures is its bark. That is why, it is said some children call dogs “bow-wow”.

#### b) The Ding -Dong theory

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<sup>2</sup> English equivalents « chirp-زقزقة », « meow-مواء ».

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This theory, associated with the German philologist, Max Muller, holds that the origin of language is connected to rhythm, and language began when humans started naming objects after a relevant sound that was already involved in their everyday life. Like the bow-wow, it relies on the idea that humans imitate what is around them. This theory suggests that we imitate the rhythms around us. For example, words such as “boom”, “crash” and “splash”.

### **c) The Pooh-Pooh Theory**

The basis for the “pooh-pooh” hypothesis holds true to the involuntary nature of human speech. Through emotional response, language and speech would have developed in tandem with human interaction and primitive emotional reactions. And it traces language back to the emotional interjections evoked by pain, pleasure, disgust, etc. Such sounds as “ouch” or “ha haha,” are commonly used to denote pain and laughter.

### **d) The Gesture or Ta-Ta theory**

The common idea is that gestures and non-verbal communication are used in social interactions. Thus, this theory was elaborated by Richard Paget (1935), who believed that body movements preceded language. This theory states that language and the development of sound were generated to support the hand gestures and movements of the individual.

### **2.2.1. The Weakness of the Four Theories**

The idea that language was originated from imitation of animal sounds arises in the “bow-wow” theory, which claims that these sounds are similar, but actually there are common sounds and others are similar, such as, the sound of a particular animal differs from one language to another. The barking of a dog in French is “waouh-waouh”, and in English “woof-woof” and in Arabic “haw-haw”. The sound and pronunciation of these words are not similar. So, each language determines and interprets a sound, and since we have many languages, one cannot prove that human vocabulary comes from them. Additionally, the problem with the second theory is that language starts with putting names to the relevant sounds and rhythm around us, but mainly the individual in his everyday life has several abstract and stable things that have names rather than sounds. Furthermore, the “pooh-pooh” theory relies on the expressions of emotional response, but in fact several languages have a different linguistic nature as sneeze and hiccup. The last theory is similar to the others, and the problem has to do with cultural aspects that have a variety of different gestures, such

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us, nodding head in Chinese means “respect and salutation” while in other cultures means “yes”, etc. cited by Dr. C. George Boere .<sup>3</sup>

These theories were from the past that came to existence in order to account for the origins of human language, but now they are no longer taken seriously. These theories were all inadequate in various ways as in trying to explain the origin of human language. However, recently several linguists and theorists have different view about what language is and how it could be developed, and onomatopoeia was studied as a figure and as a linguistic

### 2.2.2. The Theory of Onomatopoeia and Child’s Learning

*Names in every language formed by mere imitation of sound, yet these constitute a very small proportion of our dictionary. They are the playthings, not the tools, of language, and any attempt to reduce the most common and necessary words to imitative roots ends in complete failure. Müller (1861. pg. 301).*

Therefore, onomatopes are regarded as merely “playthings”, and not as a part of the language system. He argues that onomatopes are rootless, which means they have no etymology, and are unproductive, which means they cannot generate new words.

The discussion of onomatopoeia in infant language development has remained largely inactive since the contribution of Werner and Kaplan (1963), considering the feature of onomatopoeia in the early input. Onomatopoeia has a large proportion in infant’s early words, even though few studies have considered this aspect of infant language development. Werner and Kaplan work “Symbol Formation, 1963” has come to provide a detailed discussion of the importance of non-arbitrary sound-meaning links in the development of referential meaning. They agree with Farrar’s claims, (1883) declaring that onomatopoeia’s function is like “stepping stones” in language learning. Other than Werner and Kaplan’s idea, Ferguson argued with rejection claiming in his own words: “*millions of children independently create items like choochoo and bow-wow instead of the hundreds of equally satisfactory onomatopoeias that could be imagined is clearly unsatisfactory*” (1964, p.104). It means that, these onomatopoeic words were produced initially by the infant and adult interaction, and these forms were phonetically different by the imitative sounds in environment.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://webspaceship.edu/cgboer/langorigins.html>.

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More specifically, Malcolm Peet and David Robinson (1992) point out: "*Onomatopoeia is a fortunate by-product of meaning; few words, and relatively few arrangements of words, have sounds which are meaningful in themselves*" (p158). Moreover, onomatopoeia is sometimes called a figure of sound rather than a figure of speech. Yet, these word forms are an acoustic form of words which takes its position through the imitative sounds of nature, living beings and objects emphasising in its meaning. In other words, the phonetic structure of speech is important for the creation of distinct values.

Another division of onomatopoeias is made by Ullmann Stephen (1964) who distinguishes two main forms; primary and secondary onomatopoeia, saying that;

*Its primary form is "the imitation of sound by sound" where the sound is truly an echo to the sense, and "the referent itself is an acoustic experience which is more or less closely imitated by the phonetic structure of the word". Whereas, the secondary onomatopoeia is the one in which the sounds evoke, not an acoustic experience, but a movement or some physical or moral quality.* (p.84).

Ullmann exemplifies his first form with the (dither, dodder, quiver, slither, slouch, squirm, and wriggle) as examples for movements, and (gloom, grumpy, mawkish, sluggish, and wry) to exemplify the physical or moral qualities (ibid. p.84). The infant may learn some phonetic aspects in imitating sounds. In Jacobson's view (1941/80) about the discussion of onomatopoeia and its importance in the early phonological production, he sheds light on the problems that children face in this perspective whereby, in order to develop a stable and usable phonological system, infants must have the ability to memorise, recognise and reproduce segments necessarily. He relates this to the stabilisation of "*arbitrary sound distinctions aimed at meaning*" (p.25). Therefore, he mentions that it is so hard when an infant has no meaningful correspondences between sound and its referent trying to construct an arbitrary linguistic system. Also, he emphasises further on the role of onomatopoeia in this process. In relation to language development, Jacobson argues;

*An onomatopoeic sound can, so to speak, prepare and facilitate the emergence of the corresponding phonemes [...]. The child is easily taught to pronounce an r, e.g., as an imitation of the noise of motor, or an s as an imitation of whistle. He is then made aware of the identity of this sound imitation with the phoneme which he lacks.* (27)

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It means that, the production of onomatopoeic sound imitations in early word production may facilitate phonological development through the provision of production practice, and an infant may produce the segment /t/ when imitating a car, for example, which provides an opportunity to practice this phoneme without providing a segment of a whole word. Even when certain segments are too difficult for an infant to produce, they can still be produced reliably in onomatopoeic imitation of a sound. Jakobson claims that this facilitates the stabilisation of these phonemes, thus contributing to the establishment of the phonological system.

Apparently, the use of mimetics in language development has been well-documented in the literature, and found to facilitate the learning of Japanese novel verbs amongst Japanese and English speaking adults and infants (Imai et al., 2008, Kantarzis et al., 2011), as cited by Laing.C.2014.

### 2.3. The Significance of Onomatopoeia in Literature

Onomatopoeia has a distinct purpose in literary writing as in Thomas and Hill's (2012) viewpoint; onomatopoeia is one of the literary special effects that make long car trips, train trips, and airplane trips much more enjoyable. They studied some special onomatopoeia and at the end of their article, they presented some literary examples with onomatopoeia, such as, the pied piper of Hamelin and the bells of Edgar Allen Poe. More precisely, Onomatopoeia is a figure of speech and is especially useful for rhetorical devices. Sangoi (2012), states that there are lots of different examples of onomatopoeias in the newspapers' comic section, old comic books, children story book and also in fairy-tales. It can be well concluded from his work that shows how the phonemes from our surrounding context can be good examples of the onomatopoeic words which can be used in comic books and also how the lettering of these onomatopoeic words enhance the beauty of comic books effectively. Additionally, onomatopoeia was extensively used in Comic strips and comic books, such as, "*Captain Easy and Buz Sawyer*" wrote by Roy Crane (1901–1977), his book was full of strips, and according to Tim DeForest (2004) words;

*It was Crane who pioneered the use of onomatopoeic sound effects in comics, adding "bam," "pow" and "wham" to what had previously been an almost entirely visual vocabulary. Crane had fun with this, tossing in an occasional "ker-splash" or "lickety-wop" along with what would become the more standard effects. Words as well as images became vehicles for carrying along his increasingly fast-paced storylines" (p116).*

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Namely, comic books and strips writers are very familiar with this style of writing because captions of words, such as, "BOOM", "POW", and "CLANK" suggest the sounds made as their character's act and onomatopoeia can be directly related to how something is named. Furthermore, onomatopoeia, as used by poets, remains a matter of approximation of the intended natural sound by using the human sounds. As for Simpson's types of onomatopoeia; lexical and non-lexical, he states:

*Lexical onomatopoeia draws upon recognized words in the language system, words like thud, crack, slurp and buzz, whose pronunciation enacts symbolically their referents outside language. Non-lexical onomatopoeia, by contrast, refers to clusters of sound which echo the world in a more unmediated way, without the intercession of linguistic structure.*  
(2004, p.67)

From his standpoint, onomatopoeia forms a bridge between style and content. Simpson's claim of matching up with the sounds of real world is not accurate due to the impossibility of the representation of natural non-human sounds. Literature concerned with the children at an early age and those who are at a school-age till the adulthood it combined all of story books (telling fairies, short stories, novels, etc.) and poetry (children songs, nursery rhymes and poems, etc.).

### 2.3.1. Onomatopoeia in Nursery Rhymes

The history of nursery rhymes is about traditional poems or songs for children. The usage of the term dates from the late 18th/early 19th century. During this period, it appeared in England as a book for young children that included traditional nursery rhymes. It was known as mother goose rhymes in northern America (Opie, 1997). Additionally, most nursery rhymes were not written down until the 18th century, before this time they mostly have been sung or spoken. However, through such a progression in history, old or even ancient nursery rhymes have survived such as, "Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker's man". Many nursery rhymes have been argued to have hidden meanings and origins, also their relevance to children's language acquisition and development is said to be an important issue to develop their phonological awareness.

According to Anthony & Lonigan (2004) word; "*phonological sensitivity is a single ability that can be measured by a variety of tasks [...] that differ in linguistic complexity (e.g., syllables, rimes, onsets, and phonemes)*". (p.51). Here, they view that the child's general sensitivity to the sounds of the language is the most important factor hence, both rhyme and

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phonemic sensitivities are significant predictors to realise the ability of reading and spelling. Moreover, nursery rhyme may in fact be the child's first good experienced literacy, from the crib to the classroom. It helps children have a great way into learning early phonic skills which means the ability to hear, identify and manipulate letter sounds. As Angelou (2005) claims: "*The ear is attuned to hearing melody from birth, whether the melody is that of the mother's lullaby or the tune of languages spoken*" (as cited by Heald, 2008, p. 227). Therefore, Children are able to repeat and introduce the sounds of their native language when hearing the rhymes that are articulated in sounds of the words.

Most importantly, children begin to develop their language skills at an early age and nursery rhymes that caregivers are accustomed to singing to the child are, perhaps, seen as an imitative type of language "stimulus or input". Besides the phonological awareness and subsequent literacy, vocabulary acquisition is raised when children hear and use new words that they would not come across in everyday language. In other words, nursery rhymes improve the child's vocabulary, such as, the famous and oldest one;

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,  
How I wonder what you are!  
Up above the world so high,  
Like a diamond in the sky

(Opie, 1997, p. 397-8)

Additionally, vocabulary growth seems to emerge simultaneously with developing metalinguistic abilities, i.e. the ability to realise the concept of language and word development (Menn.L & Stoel.G, 1996). Children are able to have new vocabulary and new concepts and develop them at the same time.

Nursery rhymes are easy to repeat, so they tend to become some of a child's first sentences. Because children start to speak by using single words, and eventually put them together to express meaning, nursery rhymes allow even very young children to speak and understand in full sentences; which are a skill they will need before they are able to read. Also, they help the infant child to recognise certain sound (animal sounds, object sounds and natural ones) even in a visual or spoken way. They will imitate these sounds and be aware of the right and suitable imitative sound for the conventional word such as in "old Macdonald

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had a farm”<sup>4</sup> which has a plenty of animal sounds and rhymes. Therefore, each verse of the song changes the name of the animal and its respective noise.

Old MacDonald had a farm

E-I-E-I-O

And on his farm, he had a cow

E-I-E-I-O

With a moo-moo here

And a moo-moo there

Here a moo, there a moo

Everywhere a moo-moo

Old MacDonald had a farm

E-I-E-I-O

“Wikipedia page”<sup>5</sup>

The purpose of this song is to engage children to understand the different sounds animals make. The animal sounds are described as "quack", "moo", "meow" and "woof" depending on the animal that makes the sound. These words are not real words found in the dictionary; they are words that are direct representations of a sound.

Here, child becomes increasingly complex over time as the infant acquires a full lexicon of both mimetic and non-mimetic words (Iwasaki et al., 2007; as cited by Laing,C, 2014). It is necessarily to mention that the onomatopoeic words or mimetic sounds play a role in developing early word learning which suggests that they may similarly support learning new word forms in the early output.

Although the nursery rhymes are short, they follow a clear sequence of events as well as storytelling that contains a beginning, middle and end. It is quite like the first stories a child is able to follow and understand. An engagement with a sequence of events would be a skill they need when reading and developing their language skills. More than this, folktales are an introductory phase to read, analyse and write about poetry throughout their school career, as

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<sup>4</sup> It translated into Egyptian Arabic language; "جنو علي عندو مزرعة"

<sup>5</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old\\_MacDonald\\_Had\\_a\\_Farm](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_MacDonald_Had_a_Farm).

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well as, story books. In other words, nursery rhymes represent early form of poetry. “*Children’s books are important educationally, socially, and commercially*”. (Hunt,1994: 1). Peter Hunt emphasises the power of literature and its educational influence Children’s language development would be affected and they will be developing readers also.

### 2.3.2. Onomatopoeia in Poetry

Literary works are used to entertain, to teach a moral lesson, to convey meaning, or more importantly, to make the reader be aware of some aspects of the human condition. Through their work, writers creatively share their ideas and express themes that are timeless and universal. Also, onomatopoeia is one of the literary devices that poets might use in addition to the rhyme, alliteration, personification, and so on.

*"My favourite word is 'onomatopoeia,' which defines the use of words whose sound communicates or suggests their meanings. 'Babble,' 'hiss,' 'tickle,' and 'buzz' are examples of onomatopoeic usage".(Letty Cottin Pogrebin, quoted by Lewis Burke Frumkes, 2011. S7).* Namely, onomatopoeia is often used in literature to create aural effects that mimic the visual thing being described. Authors sometimes use combinations of words to create an onomatopoeic effect not necessarily using onomatopoeic words. Also, onomatopes create a vivid reading experience in the reader’s mind by creating a valuable way to describe the actual sound. It has always been a functional poetic device which enjoys a high sound significance in the poetry of many languages. For example “Cynthia in the Snow” poem;

It sushes.

It hushes

The loudness in the road.

It flitter-titters,

And laughs away from me.

It laughs a lovely whiteness,

And whitely whirs away,

To be,

Some otherwhere,

Still white as milk or shirts.

So beautiful it hurts.

Gwendolyn Brooks, 1956.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <https://comeliatrent.wordpress.com/2015/02/01/cynthia-in-the-snow/>.

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Brooks attempts to recreate the feeling of a little girl playing in the snow in the form of metaphor. She uses imagery to describe snow and onomatopoeia to describe the sound of snow. This use of onomatopoeia helps the reader to understand when there are not better words to cross the real point. The famous book “The Cat in The Hat” is one of children’s poetry books renowned by the author and poet Dr. Seuss. This famous book has been praised for its amusing musical language and captivating illustrations. The Hat may be one of the suitable books of Dr. Seuss for older children, as he also wrote books for beginning readers. One such, “Hop on Pop”, which is a poetry book that has much more rhyming words. (figure3).

What is remarkable about “Hop on Pop” is that it starts with the simplest instructive words and sentences which gradually become more complex. So, the book depicts actual reading activity, and how young children can read little simple words, whilst parents are able to read longer, more difficult words. As it says on the book’s back page, when children have learnt one word they will be able to read the others. Moreover, the importance of onomatopoeia is shown in poems studied by Barahani who mentions that “*onomatopoeia is the basic source of every language concluding that the poets do not use this phenomenon as it should be*”. (1979, p43). That is to mean, onomatopoeia is like a literary device which figurate things. In addition to rhymes, poetry and nursery rhymes share specific features which are claimed to be especially appealing to children, therefore becoming a part of their language experience, such as, rhythm, musicality and repetition.

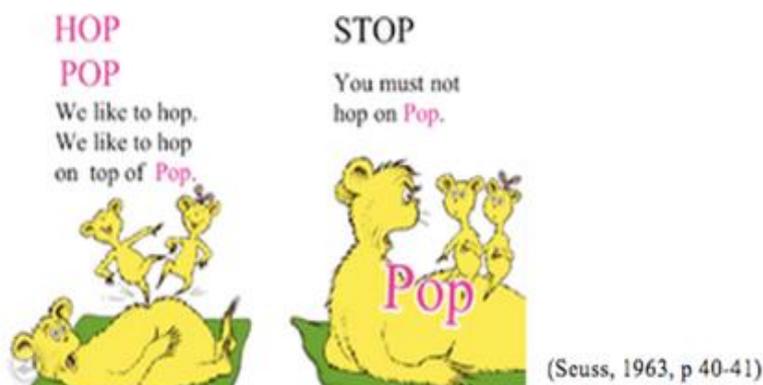


Figure 3- Dr Seuss (1963, p40-41).

### 2.4. Onomatopoeia and Home Literacy

#### 2.4.1. What is Home Literacy

When talking about home literacy most of scholars refer to it as the actual activity of reading at home. Whether it is a silent or loud reading, the essence of home literacy is bound to the active involvement of reading. Reading activities at home are essentially exposed to children, and literacy at one point, becomes a part of children's experience in their daily life. Constantly, children acquire and develop their language skills before reaching their school. Through time, children start to recognise the different sounds and noises around their environment and their attention is increasingly extended to language.

Young children are exposed to some forms of singing or reciting a nursery rhyme experiences done by their parents especially before bed time or as a calming remedy. On the other hand, children at a much older age may have their bed time story told by parents and/or other adults. So, mainly, children develop and become older, and their home activities are increasingly involved with their parents, such as, reading the newspaper in imitating parents' behaviours. The child's interaction with adults is not the only influence on their language, but with the increase of modern technology, children's input is exposed to their language development, such as television- and radio programs, and computer use, e.g. YouTube.

Accordingly, there are two types of home literacy experiences, formal and informal ones (as cited in Sénéchal&LeFevre, 2002). When considering very young children and their early language skills, an emphasis must be put on the home environment, which can be categorized as informal (story reading, singing nursery rhymes, etc.), as opposed to formal environment to which the child is exposed when reaching school years (poetry, reading literature texts, doing activities, such as, the onomatopoeia worksheets, etc.).

As a result, both kinds of home literacy lead to the emergence and development of language skills of the child, whether at school-age or at an early young age. This latter deals with the interaction in social life using traditional methods or modern technology tools. Mothers and caregivers play a role in child's perception and production of early language development through directed speech. Most of mothers' production of words are onomatopoeic ones in Infant Directed Speech<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Infant Directed Speech henceforth IDS

### 2.4.2. The Use of Onomatopoeia and Infant Directed Speech

Onomatopoeia is frequently identified amongst infants' earliest words (Menn & Vihman, 2011), The infant produces a large proportion of onomatopoeic sounds in their early words which is considering as an important feature in the early input acquisition.

Relatively, there was a research that came out with results of twelve mothers who were recorded interacting with their eight-month-olds. Onomatopoeic words (e.g. quack) were compared acoustically with their corresponding conventional words (duck) and it showed that the analysis compared the prosodic features of onomatopoeic and non-onomatopoeic words in IDS, it hypothesised that onomatopoeia will be produced with more salient prosodic features than non-onomatopoeic forms words across all features measured: mean pitch, pitch range, word duration, repetition and pause length.(Fernald & Kuhl,1987; as cited by Catherine Laing 2014). The findings shed light on the important relationship between perception and production in early language development, and further demonstrate the effect of IDS features on infant language development.

Furthermore, the production of onomatopoeic words in infants' early language, in Kauschke and Hofmeister's (2002) view as cited by Laing(2014) is like a passing phase and the infant output and input increase as a proportion of the lexicon over the second year before being replaced by more conventional lexical items. The authors show the relation between the response of infant output to the changes in the input; and the decrease in use of onomatopoeia can be seen in both mothers' and infants' outputs over the time. According to Kauschke and Klann-Delius,(2007),(ibid,2014) "personal-social words", including onomatopoeia, decreased significantly in the infants' input over the time. They drew their results from the changing use of onomatopoeia in infant-directed speech, the vocabulary of German mothers was found to parallel that of their infants, their findings refer to the role of social-pragmatic of onomatopoeic words, which are reported to be important in establishing early conversations.

Moreover, in the role of the input in infants' production of onomatopoeic words, Leopold (1939) provides evidence which refers to the acquisition of onomatopoeic forms by infants that based on onomatopoeic-style imitations. He presents this evidence according to his daughter Hildegard when she learned the sound "sch, sch, sch!" from her grandfather, used in games relating to trains (Catherine Laing 2015, p32). As it is mentioned also in an exploratory analysis of onomatopoeia in early phonological development done by Catherine

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Laing 2015, who states that the infants' use of onomatopoeia is formed rather than conventional words suggesting that many urban infants might produce onomatopoeic sounds as "moo" and "baa" in reference to cows and sheep even if they never heard it before. In order to conclude, there were two theories about the importance of onomatopoeia acquisition. Both theoretical perspectives were advanced by Werner and Kaplan (1963) and Imai and Kita (2014) who stated that infants' acquisition of onomatopoeia could realise at an early age, and this phenomenon played a role in acquiring infants' attention more successfully. However, despite the general idea that infants produce a large proportion of onomatopoeia in their early words, few studies emerged in the aspect of infant speech.

Additionally, it was criticised by Behrens,(2006); who considered onomatopoeic meaningless or irrelevant when compared to the 'conventional' word forms of the developing infant, which continue to progress into the adult language. Particularly, all human societies adjust their speech in communication with young children, whereas the form IDS might be a leader to the development of child's language.

### **Conclusion**

It has long been observed that onomatopoeia has an important role in many children's early words. Thus, our society is not as quiet at times as we would like it to be. Everywhere we go, signs of communication are around. Words and sounds express the way how our planet functions. Children are surrounded by words and sounds that they may or may not understand. In any instance, they are encouraged to begin ways of communicating. Sound has been around for ages and it is universal in all varied and complex environments. Despite the non-common origin, onomatopes for the same sound in different languages are influenced or restricted by the different phonological systems, leading to discrepancies between them. In addition, onomatopes are as productive as any other words which have no limits to its usage. It's a language that can fit in many subjects. Whereby, onomatopoeia poetry, music and sound words, with the collaboration of basic reading and writing, and other needed elements can create a new dimension of higher intellectual learning for children.

## **Chapter Three**

# **Data Collection and Analysis**

### Introduction

From birth and on, children are programmed to develop speech and language. Also, both of them are tools to express ideas, intentions, needs and thoughts in order to convey meaning through spoken and written communication. Therefore, language development is important for children to exchange information with others in a meaningful way even with the usage of signs. At the early stages of child's language development, the brain is programmed to speech sounds and begins to mimic them. The cognitive development of a child may either be explored through activities in the child's environment based on predictable cognitive stages, or could be related to social and cultural experiences which facilitate learning through interaction with others. Most importantly, children attempt to imitate and repeat sounds around them. The preeminent point is the substantial importance of social interaction in language acquisition, acquiring sounds, early lexical words, vocabulary, etc. However, children developed their language skills in relation to their parents, peers and caregivers through singing songs, reading children books, playing games and naming objects.

Therefore, the present chapter will be dealing with research methods in order to show which research type was based on to analyse data collection. Then, research tools that used to collect information will be discussed. Additionally, the participants who were involved in this study will be taking into account. Also, procedure was done in order to clarify both tools of this study. Furthermore, results and findings' interpretation will summarise the interview that conducted with caregivers besides the observational sessions. Finally, the discussion of findings will be based on the content of both research tools.

### 3.1. Research Method

Based on the nature of the research questions, a qualitative approach was used for the collection and analysis of the data necessarily for the success of this investigation. According to Dornyei (2007), "*qualitative research includes a data collection procedure that is open-ended and has non-numerical data*". (:24). Hence, the results are mainly analysed by non-statistical methods. In addition, the number of participants is small and the data is analysed and interpreted based on participants' words and replies. The most dominant research type which will be used is the one that analyses results by non-statistical methods, which is related to observation and interview's analysis.

### 3.2. Research Tools

Collecting the data for this research work necessitated conducting interviews and observations. These tools utilised for the role objective of reaching satisfactory results. The first one is an interview with five caregivers from five different kindergartens in Algeria. The questions were designed in the form of a structured interview which is very similar to a questionnaire, this type of interview deals with the same questions given to different respondents by the same way. Some of these questions are closed-ended (yes/no questions) but they are confirmed with open-ended questions for more classification. The interview comprised eighteen questions prepared in Arabic language and translated into English, and it ended with some opinion questions, where the informants could add any bits of information. While the rest of the questions addressed the kindergarten's programme for children, how caregivers teach the mimic sounds for them, and how it helps them to learn more about their mother tongue. During the interview, some personal information about the informants, such as, the number of children, experience background and some details about caregivers' role in child learning development, was collected. The main reason for selecting the interview instead of a questionnaire as a basis for data collection was the need to work directly with the informant by creating conversations to cover all the bases of the research. (see appendices)

The observation is yet another method for data collection in a qualitative study. It was useful to see how people react in natural situations. There are various techniques for data collection through observation, including written description, taking notes, video recording, photographs, artifacts, and finally documentation. The technique used in this research is about taking notes and written description on how mothers deal with their younger children in terms of language perception and production. During the observation period for the research, approximately five observations were conducted; mothers and their infants, age between six months to five years old, were under observation. Mother number one and her one-year-old child, second one and her eight-month-child, third mother and her five-year-old boy. The fourth and fifth mothers and their children between three and for years old.

All the observational sessions were conducted during a time period of eight days, two days for each mother. This made it easier to review and compare the similarities and differences between mothers.

### 3.3. Participants

The participants in this study were caregivers of children who were attending Algerian kindergartens. The children were between one and five years old. The reason why this age group for children was selected is because of the fact that caregivers tend to be more involved in assisting younger children with respect to language skills before school. On one hand, five kindergartens were chosen in order to take a part in the investigation. Participants in this study were from different regions in Algeria three of them were in Mostaganem “*Rawdat Al-ahlam*”, “*Les Petites Papillons*”, and “*Maternel Crèche*”; and the other ones were both from Algiers “*Rawdat Tasnim*” and “*Alworoud*” in Tizzy Ouzo. On the other hand, mothers were taken into account when they talked to their younger infants in everyday-life communications. Observation was taken randomly; and four mothers from Mostaganem were observed while helping their children acquire and obtain knowledge for their early words production using onomatopoeic words.

### 3.4. Procedure

In this current study, data was collected by the means of two research tools in the form of an interview and observation procedure. Firstly, the interview was directed to the caregivers in different kindergartens emphasising the aspect of onomatopoeia in child’s learning and its usage for obtaining knowledge. Secondly, mothers’ use of the mimic sounds was taken into consideration during early production of words in early childhood through regular observation. The results and findings are the outcome of this research that will be shown in qualitative analysis.

### 3.5. Caregivers’ interview

The basis of the research was interviews and observations. This upcoming section presents summaries of the interviews that were conducted and also of the observations that were made during the research period, the former done in kindergartens and the latter at home with mothers. This study aims to investigate the use of onomatopoeia in child’s learning and in the early production and perception of words during early childhood. The researcher interviewed a total of five caregivers in five kindergartens for this thesis. Questions were grouped into four parts, some of them were closed ones and others were clarifying ones and ending with open-ended questions.

#### **-Background information**

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Q1. How many kindergarteners do you have?

Q2. What is the appropriate age for child custody?

When the interview was opted and conducted to these five kindergartens, questions from (Q1) to (Q5) were grouped under the background information. When asking about the number of children that were being nursed, three kindergartens guarded approximately sixty to ninety children age from five months to five years old, while the ones left were guarded about thirty to fifty children age between for months to four years old. Most of them nursed young children from toddlerhood till the preschool age. Each kindergarten divided the infants into groups and each group was guarded by a babysitter or caregiver.

**Q3.** As caregiver, do you think that you have a role in child learning and developing his language?

All the five caregivers agree that they have a big role in child's language acquisition and development by having interactions between the child and the caregiver, besides the child's confidence and freedom in terms of movement and speaking with other children (Q3), Also offering them play things and educative games. Therefore, all of these were help child to develop his thought and language specially during play time and interactions with other children. The caregivers said that "children begin to acquire and develop their early words, and their pronunciation becomes better due to their interactions with babysitters and other children, as well as family and social environment." So here, they mean that social life and home play an important role in developing their language skills, because some of children may have problems in producing words, pronouncing letters and making sentences.

**Q4.** Do you notice that the child's language has improved since he came to the kindergarten? And how?

The informants claimed that child develops his language more and more since the moment they they come to the kindergarten. Both caregivers of "*RawdatTasnim*" and "*Maternel Crèche*" related the language development of child; since they have arrived to the kindergarten; to the programmes they gave and with the help of parents. The caregiver of Maternel Crèche assumed that she helped children to pronounce all letters well in both Arabic and French language through conversations, either with her or with other children. Here, the infant may come across problems in pronunciation and have retardation in speaking and so on, and the child through caregiver's attentions and interactions with children can prove his progress and success in the speaking skill. While in Tizzy Ouzo kindergarten, children proved

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their language only through their programmes, because some parents never dealt with their children as speaker or seeker for knowledge. Children at a particular age came to the kindergarten having no fluency in speaking or even producing words. Surely their programmes helped child to obtain knowledge, but it is not enough without the parental role at home. The rest of kindergartens related the child language development to the dialogues among children and to the self-confidence they gave, then through movement and play-time. It means that freedom in playtime and speech among each other may lead them to progression and development.

**Q5.** Surely you teach the child during the period of nursing and the time he spends with his friends! Do not you? So, what is your syllabus and what do you teach children in general?

When asked about the programme caregivers answered in a similar way. All the kindergartens offered lessons to children, age from three years till five years old which included, Islamic lessons, counting numbers (mathematics), and teaching language (letters, words), either singing songs with movement, such as, dancing, clapping hands, or repeating sounds for three to four year old children and producing a whole sentence for five year old children. However, they differ in the way of presenting. These lessons helped them to prepare for preschool age.

### - Sound imitation

**Q6.** Is teaching children how to imitate animal sounds and things include your syllabus?

Interview questions from six to ten targeted sound imitation. Imitative or mimic sounds were essential elements in developing perception and production of words. Concerning the sixth question, one of the five kindergarten “*Rawdat Al-ahlam*” caregiver assumed that these mimic sounds are not important things, trifling and have no value in child’s learning. she added that it was a plaything and child took it in funny way. The important thing about this question was seeing the first stairs for the rest, and she did not answer correctly to all successive questions, she rather deviated each question and the answer was one. She focused on psychological issues, attitude of the child and the impact of society on him. Therefore, she responded to the interview from a psychological perspective which may be due to either her specialty as a psychologist or she had no experience at all with children and their linguistic development.

On the contrary, the four caregivers gave suitable answers to all questions. Dealing with the (Q6), they agreed the point that onomatopoeia was within their programme.

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Onomatopoeia was much more than imitating sounds and helped in obtaining knowledge and new vocabulary as they claimed. One of these kindergartens in Mostaganem “*Maternel crèche*” offered a CD to their children containing animals and objects’ sounds without images in order to utilize their auditory sense to develop their listening skills and gain new vocabulary they have not heard before. As well as the other kindergartens that offered onomatopoeia in teaching sounds in order to gain new words and sounds, such as, sounds of nature, objects and animals with their conventional words.

Q7. When you want to show or express something to them, do you name it or just imitate it? Or both?

Q8. what do you say when you want to show them a care or a bus?

Whilst the seventh and eighth questions included the use of onomatopoeic words in naming things, objects and animals or use of both sounds and non-onomatopoeic words. Four caregivers had a similar answer that use both conventional and onomatopoeic words to refer to something. As an important thing they agreed that those imitative sounds facilitated learning some new lexical words, and for providing an example, it was given to them in (Q8) naming a car to children. In Algiers kindergarten, the caregiver never used the onomatopoeic word for a car “Tiiit” or “3an3an” which is referred to “peep” in English. They only use the conventional word to children, age between three to five years old, which could be a reason to keep the child with formal lexical word rather than the informal sound, but for animals, they use the mimic sounds. However, the other caregivers think in the same way that using both conventional and onomatopoeic words for children, age between two and half till the four, for example; “طيط طيط” “سيارة” “عنعن”<sup>1</sup>.

Q9. And what the child say?

In addition, regarding the ninth question there was a special case in Tizzy Ouzo kindergarten where a five-year-old child never used the conventional words despite that most of children at the same age tended to use the non-onomatopoeic words much more than the onomatopoeic ones. This may be related to the lack of home and environment’s guidance in child language development, while his mother produced it a lot during her speech without mentioning the non-onomatopoeic equivalent. Because this child here was not like the other children at a similar age. According to the caregiver, he used a lot of sound words, such as,

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<sup>1</sup> English translation: « car », « peep », « rooaaarr ».

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«<sup>2</sup>شغن شغن" "فن فن" "بع بع"» for naming a “lamb”, “airplane” and “bus”. Whilst other children used both sound and conventional words.

Q10. Imitating sounds is considered as a part of a daily conversation and often we imitate the animals' sounds. So being a caregiver, do you imitate these sounds and name the animal? Exemplify please!

In the tenth question of the interview focused on imitating sounds to the children during their speech to caregivers and teaching animals with their sounds which is available in all kindergartens those share the same method for teaching animal sounds with their names and corresponding words. It helps them to recognise the animal and its sound that they could not produce before. Such as, “<sup>3</sup>ووهه" "صغير الرياح" "هو هو" نباح الكلب“». After teaching them conventional words with their description of sounds, children would acquire new vocabulary and producing new sounds and long or short vowels. They developed their phonological awareness. Most caregivers imitate sounds of nature, animals and objects through repetition using auditory, touching, visionary senses. Answers for this question were similar.

### -Nursery rhymes

Q11. Do you give nursery rhymes to children? Do they contain an imitation of animal and object's sounds?

Questions from eleven to fourteen were about using onomatopoeia and mimic sounds in nursery rhymes. When the question was asked to caregivers if sound imitation was included in teaching nursery rhymes to children the answer was common among them; that some nursery rhymes include animal sounds much more than other sounds. And these songs were differed from one kindergarten to another, besides the well-known song which used in all kindergartens, the one which imitates objects' sounds.(see appendices).

Q12. Do these rhymes develop child's language by improving his pronunciation and acquiring new vocabulary? Give examples please?

Q13. When children play, do you notice the repetition of some words such as “boom”, “bang”, and “peep”; طاع ( صطراخ , ) طيبط?

Q14. Do these words have relation to language development? Give examples please!

<sup>2</sup> English translation : « baa-baa », “vroom”, “crancked”

<sup>3</sup> English translation: « barking of dog bow-wow and whistle of the wind.

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Regarding (Q12), they were agreed that those nursery rhymes made the child turn into a good speaker and follower for rhymes (intonations). Through these songs, the child obtained new lexical words, vocabulary, and smooth pronunciation of sounds and letters as well. In the answers of (Q13), most of children in all kindergartens whose caregivers were interviewed, repeated and produced sounds such as <sup>4</sup> "وغ و غ" "طييط طيط" "صطراخ" "طع طع" during playtime. And these onomatopoeic words represented early production of words in infants, age one to three years old, and for children from four to five years old, used them for expressing feelings, thoughts, and imagination using their cognitive abilities. Replies of both "*Les petites papillons*" and "*Ahworoud*" to (Q14) stated that child developed their cognitive process during playtime and proved their production of words very well. On the other hand, the caregiver of kindergarten "*Al-ahlam*" assumed that she never let a child produce such words and language skills never progressed. She said that to prove herself as a perfect guide and best caregiver who has a big role in child's development and she did not like these words in the first place. In the contrary, both caregivers from "*Maternel Crèche*" and "*RawdatTasnim*" supported the role of these sound words in developing language skills both speaking and listening skills, and while child produced those words they pronounced vowels and consonants, and they would know how to spell words. Correspondently, their phonological awareness will arise as well as production of words and perception of letters. As the caregivers exemplified an interesting model which was, when the infant produces the sound "طع"<sup>4</sup> he produces letters and consonants such as "ط"<sup>5</sup> so as a result he would recognise and would obtain a new letter sound.

Q15. Is telling stories included within your syllabus?

Q16. When you tell a story, do you imitate sounds? Why?

Two questions enquired about reading or telling stories (Qs15-16), all the kindergartens tell stories to children. Most of them show pictures and imitating sounds "animal, natural, and objects' sounds" during reading short stories or children books. Caregivers answered in similar way too, that this kind of storytelling taught the child to be a good follower, receiver, and speaker. Whereas, the kindergarten that thought that onomatopoeia is a virtual thing never imitate sounds in reading children books.

### -Opinion part

Q17. do you think onomatopoeia can improve child's pronunciation and help him to acquire new terminology? How?

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<sup>4</sup>English translation: « sound refers to "bang", "boom", "peep", "waah"

<sup>5</sup> « /t / »

Q18. In the end, what is the main reason that makes the child learn these sounds and improve his language? You or the environment? Or both?

In the interview, there were two additional open-ended questions (Qs17-18). Regarding the (Q17), the one caregiver who never used onomatopoeic words thought that those words did not help the child in acquiring and obtaining new lexical words. while the others claimed that those mimic sounds helped the infant to produce a lot of new words semantically, phonologically and morphologically. For example, there were some children never knew the right sound for an animal or an object and some of them never knew how to produce a sound or morpheme or consonant. However, these onomatopoeic words gradually led the infant produce his early words. The view point of all caregivers about child language development have relation to the social interactions and home environment, and they see that the role of kindergarten and caregiver were like a supporter and complementary guide to child language development.

### 3.6. Observations

In addition to interviewing the caregivers regarding the use of onomatopoeic words, observations of mothers with their children were also conducted. The aim for the observations was to see if the onomatopoeic words used by mothers among their infants help them to obtain knowledge and make the early production of words so easy. Observations took place at home during eight days, with four mothers. Two days for each mother. The first mother had a girl who was about eighteenth months. The second had two boys age between three and five years old. The third one has a three years old girl, and the fourth mother has a girl aged four years old. The information that will be presented was sorted into four sections; each mother alone. During the observation period, each mother was observed multiple times during two days.

#### -Observation Mother n°1

##### a) First day

The observation included how this mother dealt with her child, and it took place at home. During their speech, that mother used particular sounds and words, and her child began to laugh and tried to imitate her mother with producing similar sounds. The onomatopoeic sounds were referred to things and animals. During dinner time, mother talked to her infant and symbolised the airplane with a small spoon producing such sounds telling her that “the

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airplane is coming “*ven-ven*” and showing her the airplane picture on TV. Also, that mother used many sounds when referring to objects and animals. When she insisted in teaching something to her child, she repeated it a lot till her girl obtained that sound. During playtime, the mother described the doll as baby and she made his crying sound. She said that “oh! Baby is crying waah-waah let us give him his dummy”, and here, her child respond to the sound directly. Additionally, when the little girl wanted to go to bed she said to her mother “*do-do*”, because this is her first word, these onomatopoeic words are her early word with regard to her age.

### **b) Second day**

In the following day at dinnertime, the mother showed the spoon to the little girl and symbolised it as flying airplane, the child directly produced the sound that airplane produced when flying away. Also, her child recognised that airplane sounds “*ven-ven*” and once she saw the picture of the airplane she produced this sound again. In addition, this girl at this young age produced her first words as her mother claimed that she never used these words before. The researcher noticed that this mother uses both conventional and onomatopoeic words during her speech with her child. Whereas, the early productive words were onomatopoeic ones for this young girl.

### **-Observation mother n°2**

#### **a) First day**

The observation included mother and her two children. She always used both conventional and onomatopoeic words while indicating things and animals. She prepared her older boy age four years old, to go the school and taught him mathematics by counting numbers and the language by speaking to him either in formal or vernacular way. She taught sounds to him through reading stories and singing songs and naming objects and animals and in nature around him. For instance; the mother said that “this is a cow, her sound named bellow or mooing “*moo*”; he replied “*mo*” with a short vowel, but she corrected “no! “*moo*”with a long /u:/”. She helped him to produces sounds correctly. While she was singing nursery rhymes and naming things with her three-year-old boy, she repeated sounds during pla time. She used words that her boy never heard before during singing songs to get new vocabulary words.

#### **b) Second day**

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During the observation of both children during playtime, they produced such words imitating animals and exemplifying object sounds. For example; the older child produced sounds of “cow” saying “moo” correctly and his younger brother utilised his new lexical words that he got before. Their mother noticed that her boys developed their language skills through the right use of mimic sounds. It is observed that phonological awareness at early production of words arises and progresses through the use of the onomatopoeia.

### **-Observation mother n°3**

#### **a) First day**

During observation, this mother interacted with her little girl as an adult in their directed speech. She rarely used onomatopoeia in describing things and expressing ideas. Despite that the girl used it in her few words. It was noticed that television and the world around her deranged her early words to be onomatopoeic ones. She listened to nursery rhymes on TV. Most of those songs contained onomatopoeia in order to make the rhythm, this little girl imitated and repeated sounds in these songs such as animal and objects' sounds. For example; when she sees the “rooster” on television she says: “mama cou-cou”, intending to say “mum look! this is a rooster”. Instead of saying word she imitates the sound independently. She recognised that this sound is for this specific animal, whereby, the mother did not imitate sounds when referring to animals, most importantly, that girl knew most of animal sounds due to watching TV and her environment.

#### **b) Second day**

The observation was the same as first day. The mother talked to her child all day especially at bedtime. The mother also used conventional words more than onomatopoeic ones. However, the child obtained new words with good pronunciation of sounds because of the sounds presented on television. In addition, she helped her when the girl produced words wrong. Despite the fact that this mother did not use onomatopoeia, she corrected her child's pronunciation mistakes.

### **-Observation mother n°4**

#### **a) First day**

During mother's speech with her four-year-old boy, it was observed that she used onomatopoeia a lot. For example, at bedtime she said “*Nini*” instead of “go to bed”. Also, she

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used the word “*Shhht*” for “to keep silent”, and used the word “*Hammy*” instead of “eat” and a lot of such words. The interaction with her child was onomatopoeia-dependent.

### a) Second day

Regarding this observation, the mother used onomatopoeia during conversation with her boy, and he also used it frequently. The mother imitated and repeated sounds during singing songs and telling stories, and the child repeated words and sounds that he heard from nursery rhymes, specially, new words that he never used before, as sound of “bell” “Ding-dong”. Also, when his mum reading books and stories he referred to things with sounds which his mother mentioned before. For instance; when he saw a baby, he said “Momo” and “Haw-haw” instead of dog. Afterwards, during playtime he expressed his ideas through repeating and imitating sounds such as "عن عن" which refers to “driving a car”. Furthermore, it is worth noticing that onomatopoeic words are more useful than conventional ones, and it is shown how onomatopoeia is more salient in child’s early production of words.

### 3.7. Findings and Discussion

This present study aims at investigating whether the use of onomatopoeia helps children to produce new vocabulary and be salient in their early words. In other words, if the mimic sounds could facilitate the language learning of the child; if onomatopoeia helps children to prove their pronunciation, and how the early productive vocabulary of children could be onomatopoeic, in order to reach the answers to the questions raised in this research, two different method tools were conducted. The discussion was based on the content of the interviews and observation.

Regarding caregivers’ interview, four sections were divided to present data collection, in addition to observations. Firstly, within the background information about caregivers in different kindergartens, they accomplished the language skills of children and helped them to develop it. While their programmes were sufficient and important for language learning development, to improve their listening and speaking skills. The child as a seeker for knowledge developed his mental functions under level development with the help of others and guidance of adults.

Secondly, the role of onomatopoeia in child language development was truly realised. Most of children made a progress in their early phonological production. It means that while the child imitated sounds, he produced segments which were difficult for him to produce

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before. Moreover, the child would be a good speaker due to the auditory sense used in listening sounds as he developed his listening and speaking skills. Also, children would gain new words and sounds, i.e. obtaining new vocabulary terms and producing new sounds with the progress of phonetical pronunciation.

Thirdly, concerning songs and nursery rhymes, infants developed their phonological awareness through rhymes which this latter and the phonemic sensitivity are the significant predictors to realise the ability of reading and spelling. To become a good speaker, listener and reader too shortly after kindergarten. Children learned more about their early phonic skill which means it developed their hearing sense and they were able to manipulate letter sounds. Moreover, children obtained new vocabulary which they would not come across in everyday language. Most children loved the imitative sounds in nursery rhymes which are so easy to repeat whereby these sounds tend to become generally their first sentences. Children less than four years old produced their first sound words which could be converted to expressions of feelings and thought by using their cognitive development at age of five. As Dogmar Bittner et al, assume; *"the use of onomatopoeia is an important face in the acquisition of verb morphology, because it helps a child a) to learn differentiate between events ( actions ) and entities, b) to recognize varies types of situations (with the help of interlocutor's commentaries"* .( 2003,p. 139). Also through listening to stories, children can acquire new lexical words that facilitate their way of expressing. Fourthly, there were five caregivers; four of them confirmed that onomatopoeia has a good effect on children in learning and acquiring language grammatically, semantically and phonologically. Besides, this development of language has many functions, such as, mother's and caregiver's role and environment. Whereas, one of them did not agree and neglected completely that onomatopoeia helps in child's language development.

Daily observation included four mothers at home with their five children.

Mothers	Gender / Age	Days	Observations
1	1Girl / 18Months	2	-Using onomatopoeic and non-onomatopoeic words
2	2Boys / → 5 Years ↘ 3 Years	2	-Using both conventional and onomatopoeic words -Using only onomatopoeic words
3	1Girl / 3 Years	2	-Rarely using onomatopoeic words
4	1Boy / 4 Years	2	-Using onomatopoeic words too much

**Table1:** -The use of onomatopoeia in Child Directed Speech

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The table shows all children's early productive words including onomatopoeia which helps them to develop their phonological awareness, acquire new terminology, and produce letter sounds correctly. Then, listening and speaking skills improved by the development of the language of the child. To conclude, the use of onomatopoeic words is more salient than conventional words.

### **Conclusion**

Childhood has enormous change through life, as well as, their language development. Besides children can choose words that sound much like things or actions they name, creating, repeating and imitating sounds around them, such as, “r-r-r-ring”, “m-m-moo”, “ah-choo”. These sounds that they received or produced make the obtaining of letters and syllables easier which they needed for building up their phonological awareness.

## **General Conclusion**

## General Conclusion

Development starts from infancy until an old age, as well as language that is lifelong process. Certainly children do not acquire language overnight but rather go through essential steps for such linguistic development to take a place. Before all, children's language was theorised from the psychological, behavioural and social-cognitive aspects. Language acquisition is seen as a process of various developmental levels, which rely on external and internal factors, language has been viewed other generations, as inner speech then spoken words, in addition to the development in relation to learning process through communication and interaction between the child and the capable adult. For most of children this process takes place within home and kindergartens. In addition, language input exists between child and caregiver or mother. This language input is derived from two social situations, firstly, as child directed speech and secondly, with Bruner hypothesis of combining both innate capacity and role of social environment.

Children are surrounded by words and sounds that they may or may not understand because they use sound words in order to communicate and express their intentions and needs. These sound words may seem to be part of their speech and, these early productive words tend to be onomatopoeic words. At home literacy or kindergartens, most children learn some sounds which refer to animals, nature, and objects. However, the imitative sounds help them to learn new vocabulary and obtain new knowledge through adult guidance which develops their phonological awareness for producing letter sounds effectively. After previously raising research questions and their corresponding hypothesis which state that child at early age perhaps would receive and produce so many words by using onomatopoeic words which became their early productive words in child directed speech and may onomatopoeia improve language skills and linguistic aspects, phonologically grammatically and semantically, besides the use of onomatopoeia as a method may facilitates learning language for a child. All these are confirmed after collecting data and analysing it through two different method tools. Findings are concluding that onomatopoeia does facilitate learning language and develop language skills. Finally, children continue to become creative in their own.

In a nutshell, the language process is engaged in everyday life, by which encompass the ability to learn whichever language system they are introduced to. However, it is widely debated how children master knowledge of their native language.

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# **Appendices**

## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Interview's questions in English language

- 1- How many siblings do you have?
- 2- What is the appropriate age for child custody?
- 3- As a caregiver, do you think that you have a role in child learning and developing his language?
- 4- Do you notice that the child's language has improved since he came to kindergarten?  
And How?
- 5- Sure that you teach the child during the period of adoption and the time he spend with his friends! Is not it? So, what is your syllabus and what do you teach children in general?
- 6- Is it mentioned in your syllabus to teach children how to imitate animals sounds and things?
- 7- When you want to show or express something to them, do you name it or just imitate it?  
Or both?
- 8- What do you say when you want to show them a car or bus?
- 9- And what does the child say?
- 10- Imitating sounds is considered as a daily conversation and often we imitate the animal's sounds. So you as a caregiver, do you imitate these sounds and name the animal?  
Exemplified.
- 11- Do you give songs to children? Do they contain an imitation of animal and object's sounds?
- 12- Do songs develop child's language by improving his pronunciation and acquiring new vocabularies? Give examples.
- 13- When children play, Do you notice the repetition of some words such as (صطراخ, طاع, عن, عن, طيط, طيط, الخ) (Boom, peep, bang etc.)
- 14- Do these words have a relation with language development? Give reasons.
- 15- Does telling stories mentioned in your syllabus?
- 16- When you tell a story, do you imitate sounds? Why?
- 17- Do you think onomatopoeia can improve child's pronunciation and help him to acquire new vocabularies? How?
- 18- In the end, what is the main reason that makes the child learn these sounds and improve his language? You or the environment? Or both?

## Appendix B

### أسئلة الحوار

1. كم لديك من طفل هنا؟
2. ما هو السن المناسب لحضانة الطفل؟
3. هل تعتقد انك كمربية او كمساعدة لك دور في تعلم اللغة لدى الطفل و تطورها وتنمية قدراته؟
4. هل تلاحظين تحسن لغة الطفل منذ قدومه للحضانة؟ كيف ذلك؟
5. أكيد انك خلال فترة احتضانك للطفل والمدة التي يقضيها معك ومع الأطفال الآخرين تساعدنهم على التعلم؟ أليس كذلك ماذا تعلمون الأطفال عامة؟
6. هل تعلم الأصوات وتقليدها (أصوات الحيوانات, الأشياء, وأصوات الطبيعة) ضمن برنامجك؟
7. عند إشارتك لشيء ما أو التعبير عنه هل تسمي الشيء باسمه او تقلدينه فحسب ام الاثنين معا؟
8. عند إشارتك لسيارة أو حافلة بماذا تلفظين؟
9. والطفل بماذا يلفظ؟
10. تقليد الأصوات يعتبر من المحادثات اليومية وكثيرا ما نقلد أصوات الحيوانات. أنت كمربية هل تستعملين هاته المحاكاة عند احتكاكك مع الطفل؟ هل تقلدين الصوت وتسمي اسم الحيوان؟ أعطي أمثلة
11. هل تقدمين أناشيد للأطفال؟ من ضمن هاته الأناشيد هل فيها ما يقلد الأصوات؟ أصوات الحيوانات وأصوات الأشياء.
12. هل تساعد هاته الأناشيد من تطوير لغة الطفل و تحسن من نطقه وتجعله يكتسب مفردات جديدة؟ أعطي أمثلة إذا بالإمكان
13. عندما يلعبون الأطفال هل تلاحظين ترديد كلمات مثل (صطراخ, طاع, عن, طيط, طيط, الخ)؟
14. هل هاته الكلمات لها علاقة بتطور اللغة؟ برري الإجابة
15. هل سرد القصص ضمن برنامجك؟
16. خلال سردك للقصص هل تقلدين وتعبرين عن الأصوات؟. لماذا؟
17. في رأيك أنت هل تظنين أن المحاكاة الصوتية لها دور في تحسين ألفاظ الطفل واكتسابه لمفردات جديدة وتطور لغته؟ كيف ذلك؟
18. في الأخير عند تعلم الطفل لهاته الأصوات هل ترين بان لها علاقة بك أو أن المحيط من حوله أو أنت والعالم من حوله لكما الدور الفعال في اكتسابه لغته.