Maltese First Language Acquisition of the Plural

First language acquisition has been studied extensively both in individual languages and cross-linguistically, with various approaches and theoretical frameworks being adopted. Yet, research on Maltese First Language Acquisition (MFLA) is lacking.

In this light, I am currently carrying out my doctoral research, which this paper is based on. The aim of my ongoing research is to present a detailed description of the developmental patterns and stages that characterise MFLA, with a special focus on the ways in which features of Maltese morphosyntax are acquired. A two-year longitudinal design has been chosen for this study so as to capture the language development of participants from about 18-60 months. A total of 11 Maltese-dominant participants have been recruited and visited at least twice. The participants were aged 18-36 months at the initial data collection stage. Data collection sessions take place at 4/6-month intervals, depending on the participants' age at the initial data collection stage. Both naturalistic (free-play) and controlled (comprehension and production tasks) data are being collected during video-recorded 45-minute sessions. The data will be analysed with the aim of establishing a set of stages at which Maltese morphosyntactic elements are acquired.

In this paper, I will present a preliminary analysis of sound and broken plural data collected through a specifically-designed production task and during free-play from children aged between 3-4 years (36-48 months). An error pattern approach to the analysis was taken. Moreover, data from this study will be compared to data and results in papers on FLA in spoken varieties of Arabic (e.g., Saiegh-Haddad, Hadieh & Ravid, 2012) and studies conducted in the context of Maltese singular-plural mappings (e.g., Nieder, van de Vijver & Mitterer, 2021).

References

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