The Accuracy Order of Grammatical Morphemes in Pakistani Intermediate Level Students

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Abstract

Grammar is one of the essential aspects of language learning, particularly in second language learning. There have been various studies conducted to address the grammatical problems students face in writing while learning English as a second language. Therefore, this study explored the accuracy order of the grammatical morphemes in learners of English at an intermediate level. Specifically, it looked at the accuracy order of five English grammatical morphemes: plural –s, possessive –’s/’morpheme, regular and irregular past, progressive –ing morpheme, third-person singular s/es. Further, this study aims to compare the order of acquisition of the grammatical morphemes in male and female students and the overall order of acquisition of five grammatical morphemes in the intermediate level students. The current study is based on the theoretical assumptions provided by Dulay and Burt (1973) and Krashen (1977) for the morpheme order acquisition for L2 contexts. The data was collected through a stratified sampling technique in questionnaires from thirty male and thirty female students of intermediate level from different areas of Muzaffarabad, Azad Kashmir, Pakistan. The study's findings show that the accuracy order for the grammatical morphemes are: regular and irregular verb, third-person singular morpheme, possessive morpheme, plural morpheme, and progressive morpheme. The results also show that the order of morpheme acquisition in male and female students is different. Females acquire regular and irregular verbs first, and at last, they acquire progressive morpheme, while males acquire regular and irregular verbs first, and at last, they acquire plural morphemes. Moreover, the current research contradicts Dulay and Burt's (1973) and Krashen's (1977) research concerning grammatical morpheme acquisition. In the light of generated results, the current study also suggests a need to adequately designed classroom activities to facilitate the grammatical morpheme acquisition of EFL/ESL learners.

Keywords: Accuracy Order, Morpheme Order Acquisition, L2 Acquisition, Grammatical Morphemes, Dulay and Burt (1973), Krashen (1977).

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Introduction

Language learning is one of the distinguishing features of human beings that differentiate humans from other animals and allow them to talk about different situations and express different emotions. This unique feature of human beings makes it possible for them to communicate through different words. There are various stages that a person has to undergo in order to acquire a language since no one is born talking and no one can instantly learn or acquire a language. Therefore, the acquisition or learning of a particular language (whether first language or second language) captured the interest of many researchers (Barrot & De Leon, 2014). According to Chomsky (1957), humans have an innate capacity to acquire or learn a language, i.e., it is common to all humans. This universality of this concept helps to describe the poverty of the stimulus, i.e., human beings learn a language independently from the stimulus they have received. The idea of innateness has been used in various morpheme order studies to explain that English morphology is acquired in both first and second language (L1 and L2) acquisition in a predictable order. Such an order has been explored in the current study as well.

Many scholars have analyzed the evolution of this language acquisition process and stated that acquiring a language is a time-consuming and complex process. The researchers also explored that if there are any consistencies and commonalities in the language acquisition process. For instance, the pioneering work regarding the language acquisition process has been done by Brown (1973). He focused on L1 and stated that English speaker children acquire English inflectional morphology in a standard order. He also found that some morphemes were acquired earlier and some acquired later by the children. Irrespective of the external factors, the acquisition process follows the same route but has a different rate/speed of acquisition.

As in the language acquisition process, the acquisition of grammar is the most critical factor. According to Aitchison (1989), acquiring grammatical morphemes is one of the essential parts of the language acquisition process. According to Oxford Learners' Dictionary, morphemes are the most minor divisible meaningful or grammatical units. These can be free (independent
words, like table, etc.) or bound morphemes (cannot stand alone as an independent word, likes, -ed, etc.). Free morphemes can be further divided into lexical morphemes (open class words, like nouns, verbs, etc.) and functional morphemes (closed class words, like prepositions, articles, etc.). Bound morphemes can be further divided into inflectional morphemes (alters the grammatical form of the word but does not change the grammatical category of the word, such as balls—s, sleeping—ing, etc.) and derivational morphemes (affect the meaning of the word and changes the grammatical category of the word, such as free—freely, kind—kindness, etc.)

After Brown's (1973) study, many other types of research (Dulay & Burt, 1974; Krashen, 1977; Pica, 1983) have been conducted under the umbrella term of morpheme order studies, in which scholars tried to explore that either this phenomena of the morpheme acquisition was also valid for the second language acquisition or not. The findings of these studies seemed to agree that there is, in fact, a standard order of acquisition in the second language (L2).

However, all these studies that gained the interest of many research scholars have come under some criticism. However, morpheme order studies still play a significant part in second language acquisition research. For example, the studies of Goldschneider and DeKeyser (2001), Luk and Shirai (2009), and Kwon (2005) can be considered as evidence that morpheme order studies (MOS) are the core idea for modern-day research. As mentioned above, there have been several research works conducted worldwide on morpheme order studies. However, there has been little work done in the Pakistani context and most notably in Azad Kashmir. Therefore, the current study investigated the accuracy order of the acquired grammatical morphemes of the intermediate level students that will be significant to point out the weaknesses of the students in second language acquisition in the Pakistani context.

Statement of the Problem

Knowledge of grammar is one of the core concepts in language acquisition. There are numerous studies conducted to explore the order of acquisition of grammatical morphemes. However, there has been limited significant research done to explore the accuracy order of the
grammatical morphemes at the intermediate level students. Henceforth, the present research explored and compared the accuracy order of male and female students. The present study investigates the accuracy order of the Five English grammatical morphemes of the Intermediate Students.

Research Objectives

The current study has the following aims and objectives:
1. To explore the order of acquisition of five grammatical morphemes in the intermediate level students.
2. To find the accuracy order of the grammatical morphemes of the intermediate level students.
3. To draw the comparison of the order of acquisition of the grammatical morphemes in male and female students of intermediate level.

Research Questions

The current study aims to answer the following questions:
1. What is the accuracy order of the grammatical morphemes of the intermediate-level students?
2. How can grammatical morphemes acquired by the male and female students be compared?
3. What is the overall order of morpheme acquisition in intermediate-level students?

Significance

The current study has significance in the field of second language acquisition and can help in the development of modern and better teaching methodologies. The accuracy order of the grammatical morphemes will be helpful for the teachers in order to understand how Pakistani students learn and acquire English morphology as a second language. Moreover, the comparison drawn for the acquisition order of males and females will be beneficial for the instructors to know the fundamental disparities between them. They can design different activities to overcome the weaknesses of the ESL/EFL students. Furthermore, this study will also be valuable for the teachers, as they can design different activities for second language learners by keeping this order of acquisition in mind.

Delimitations

The present research work is delimited to the intermediate level students from the Muzaffarabad, Azad Kashmir only. Additionally, this study is also delimited to only five
grammatical morphemes: i.e.
  i. Plural –s,
  ii. possessive –'s/’ morpheme
  iii. Regular and irregular past
  iv. Progressive –ing morpheme
  v. Third-person singular s/es.

**Literature Review**

In the 1970s and 80s, several research studies conducted on morpheme acquisition found a natural order of acquisition in L1 and L2. These findings supported the idea presented by Chomsky (1981) that all learners have a Language acquisition device. These morpheme order studies are still worthy and contribute towards the research in one of the significant aspects of second language acquisition.

Brown (1973) was the initiator of the study in acquiring grammatical morphemes. He focused on the L1 acquisition, conducted a longitudinal study on three children aged 18-27 months, and observed the development of 14 grammatical morphemes. Then, these morphemes were hierarchically arranged in the accuracy rates. His findings showed that there was a similar order of acquisition of the morphemes. Table 1 shows Brown’s (1973) order of acquisition of morphemes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.#</th>
<th>Morphemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Present progressive(-ing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Prepositions (in)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Prepositions (on)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Plural (s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Irregular past tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Possessive (‘s/’’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Uncontractible copula (is,am,are)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Articles (a, the)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Regular Past (ed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Third-person singular (s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Third-person irregular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Uncontractible auxiliary (is, am, are)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Contractible copula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Contractible auxiliary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Meanwhile, Dulay and Burt (1973) researched whether there is a similarity in L1 and L2 grammatical acquisition. Their subjects of the study were 151 Spanish-speaking ESL (English as a Second Language) learners. Their accuracy score revealed a consistent order in acquiring the morpheme order acquisition in both L1 and L2 contexts. In the same year, de Villiers and de Villiers (1973) conducted cross-sectional research on 21 kids aged 16 -18 months and found that their findings were in line with Brown’s results.
Table 2. Dulay and Burt's (1973) order of morpheme acquisition in L2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.#</th>
<th>Morphemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Copula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Progressive—ing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Plural—s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Auxiliary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Regular past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Irregular past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Possessives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>3rd person—s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

grammatical morphemes in both L1 and L2, which supported Brown's (1973) claim of hierarchy in the acquisition of grammatical morphemes.

However, the order of grammatical morpheme acquisition may differ. Krashen (1977) extended the work of Dualy and Burt (1973) and suggested the acquisition hierarchy, which consisted of four stages followed by L2 learners. He called this hierarchy as Natural Order Hypothesis, which remained fixed and was not affected by age or L1.

As shown in Figure 1, Krashen (1977) put these morphemes in different boxes and suggested that the morphemes in the same box were acquired before the next one, but in the same box, these morphemes can be acquired in a different order as well. This type of order has made this model more flexible that can be used in further studies of morpheme acquisition.

Furthermore, the morpheme order acquisition models by Brown's (1973) in L1, and Dulay and Burt's (1973), and Krashen (1977) in L2 acted as an essential inspiration in the second language acquisition studies. For instance, Barrot and Leon (2014) researched the accuracy order of 14 grammatical morphemes in the oral production of Filipino preschool pupils and determined the highest and lowest accuracy level of these morphemes. The study concluded that plural morphemes and progressive verbs had a high accuracy level while...
prepositions and past irregular verbs had the lowest. Comparing the resulted order with Brown's (1973) and Dulay and Burt's (1973) order showed the different order. Similarly, Seog (2015) investigated the accuracy order of eight grammatical morphemes in elementary school EFL learners in a Korean context. The results showed that the accuracy order did not correspond with the natural order.

Additionally, Mohammed and Sanosi (2018) studied the accuracy order of grammatical morphemes in Saudi EFL learners and compared it with Krashen's (1977) Natural Order Hypothesis. The findings revealed that the accuracy order of morphemes differed from that of Krashen's, and L1 also affected this order. While, in the Pakistani context, Khan (2014) determined the sequential presentation of grammatical morphemes in EFL Textbooks and its relation with the order of morpheme acquisition in grade five students. The study's findings revealed that the sequence of presentation of grammatical morphemes in Textbooks is different from the morpheme acquisition order of Dulay and Burt (1974). Meanwhile, the learners in the study acquired these morphemes in an order corresponding with that of Dulay and Burt (1974).

Therefore, the results of these studies show that in L2 contexts, the order of grammatical morpheme acquisition is different from the natural order presented by Dulay and Burt (1973) and Krashen (1977), which calls for more research in L2 contexts. Furthermore, previous studies looked at the accuracy order of L2 learners in other contexts as well as these studies focused on the primary and elementary level students. Consequently, the present study investigates the order of five grammatical morphemes in the intermediate level students in the Pakistani context. Moreover, the present study also investigates the accuracy order of these morphemes. Also, it compares the order of acquisition of the morphemes in male and female students of the intermediate level in Pakistan.

**Research Methodology**

**Research Design**

The current research followed the cross-sectional study method as a research design. Researchers used this descriptive approach in morpheme studies to measure the accuracy order that can be considered a powerful indication of the order of morpheme
acquisition (Mohammed & Sanosi, 2018).

**Research sample: A research tool**

The intermediate level (17-18 year old) male and female students from three renowned educational institutes, Greenwood High School and College, Global college and Quaid-e-Azam College, Muzaffarabad, Azad Kashmir, Pakistan, were the research sample for the current study. The sample size for the current study was 60, i.e., 30 male and 30 female students. The sampling was done using the stratified sampling technique in which strata were based on area, educational level, and gender. Then, a random sample was taken from each stratum of male and female. The advantage of using the stratified sampling technique is that the results represent the whole population and provide the basic information quickly. Due to this research's time constraints and word limit, the current sample size was selected for the analysis.

Moreover, a questionnaire was used as a research tool in the present study. The questionnaire consisted of 25 fill-in blanks, in which the first five blanks were about plural morpheme, the following five were related to possessive morpheme. Then the rest of the 15 blanks were jumbled and were related to the regular and irregular past, progressive –ing morpheme, and third-person singular s/es.

**Theoretical Framework**

The morpheme order acquisition models for L2 contexts by Duyay and Burt's (1973) and Krashen (1977), as mentioned in Table 2 and Figure 1, respectively, were used as a theoretical framework for the present research. These models acted as guiding parameters for the research at hand.

**Research Process**

First of all, the questionnaires got filled by 60 participants; 30 male and 30 female. Then, the quantitative data in the number of correct and incorrect responses were collected, compared, and interpreted qualitatively for the male and female. Furthermore, the data was presented through graphs and charts to comprehend better the results and formulation of the order of accuracy/acquisition.

**Data Analysis and Discussion**

For the analysis of the gathered data, the researcher used graphs,
percentages, and tables. The researcher has made the five graphs of the correct responses of girls and boys for each morpheme. Then, to determine the similarities and differences in the accuracy order of these grammatical morphemes, the researcher has made two more graphs for the male and female participants separately. Moreover, to analyze which morpheme has the highest and lowest accuracy among students, the researcher has made another graph showing the overall order of morpheme acquisition. The researcher has specified the research to the following five grammatical morphemes:

Table 3. Morphemes selected for the current analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>i.</th>
<th>Plural –s,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ii.</td>
<td>Possessive –‘s/ ‘morpheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii.</td>
<td>Regular and irregular past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv.</td>
<td>Progressive –-ing morpheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.</td>
<td>Third-person singular s/es.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For plural morpheme, the researcher included –s/-es and other irregular patterns. All the possessive markers with and without an apostrophe (‘s/ ’) were included. For progressive morpheme (-ing), all the progressive uses about aspect were incorporated. Regarding the past tense, both regular and irregular forms of the verb were included in the questionnaire. As the current study also compared the accuracy order of the grammatical morphemes, the researcher analyzed which morpheme was acquired easily and which one was difficult for the learner to acquire derived from the ratio of correct and incorrect responses given by males and females.

Plural Morpheme

The pluralization of nouns in English is formed mainly by adding s/es or through various irregular ways. The pluralization of the nouns ending on –for –fe can be done by changing –for –fe into –v and adding –es, for example, half –halves. In some cases, the singular and plural form of the noun remains the same, such as deer, and in some cases, plurals of the nouns can be formed by altering the vowel inside the singular, for instance, mouse –mice. In few nouns, the plurals are formed by adding –en, like, ox –oxen, and in various cases, the nouns are taken from foreign languages which keep their original plural form, like, the crisis is a Greek word that has its plural crises.

The above graph shows the
Figure 2. The ratio of correct responses of males and females in plural formation

The ratio of correct responses of males and females regarding plural formation. In the first statement, *I saw two deer in the zoo*, the students were asked to make plural forms of *deer*, and they made the plural of this noun as *deers*. Only 40% male and 70% female gave correct answers to this statement. They overgeneralized the regular rule of the plural formation in English. In the 2\textsuperscript{nd} statement, *He divided the pizza into four halves*, and in the 5\textsuperscript{th} statement, *Pakistan is facing many crises nowadays*; males repeated the same noun in the plural formation. Another leading cause of 100% incorrect responses, as in *half* and *mouse* from the male side, is the lack of knowledge about the plural formation rule. 100% incorrect responses from the female side as in *crisis* also showed that they do not know about the pluralization rules and overgeneralized the general rule of plural formation.

The overall result shows that 54% of females and 22% of males have given correct responses. The low percentage of the correct responses reveals that boys face more problems acquiring irregular plural morphemes than girls.

**Possessive Morpheme**

There is a general rule of putting apostrophes to show possession in English, but there are other rules for making the possessive case. For example, if the plural noun ends on –s, the possessive case is formed by adding
Figure 3. The frequency of correct responses from male and female students in possessive morpheme.

only an apostrophe, like, girls' school. In another case, when two nouns are connected, the possessive case can be formed by adding -'s/ ' on the second noun, such as Ali and Ahmed's bakery. There is another English possessive case that if hissing sound comes at the end of the word, the only apostrophe is used, for instance, justice's sake.

The above table shows the frequency of correct responses from male and female students. In the 6th statement, girls' school, 60% female responses were correct, and 50% male responses were correct. In the 7th statement, Ali and Ahmed's bakery mostly used the apostrophe -'s on both nouns, e.g., Ali's and Ahmed's bakery. Overall they have given incorrect responses. They changed the word order, putting apostrophe -'s randomly on any word, using -s but did not use apostrophes like schoolgirls, men club's, justice sake's, kings crown, etc. These incorrect answers show that students are confused, do not have sufficient knowledge for making the possessive case, and overgeneralized the general rule. Males have given 100% incorrect responses for the 8th statement, i.e., justice's sake. This reveals that males are facing difficulty in acquiring possessive cases with hissing sounds.

Overall, 56% of females and 46% of males have correctly responded to the possessive morpheme. The researcher observed that the students were only aware of apostrophe -'s as they gave 80% correct responses for statement # 9, i.e., men's club, because the general rule of the apostrophe -'s
Verb (regular and irregular)

In English grammar, there are specific rules for making the verb (regular and irregular). Generally, -ed is put on the end of the verb, like, spoil – spoiled, but there are specific other rules for verb formation. The following Figure 4 shows the findings for the accuracy of verbs.

In dealing with the verb “put,” learners gave 70% correct answers; this shows that both male and female learners are acquiring this verb in an equal manner. In statement #11, *The news has spoiled my dinner*, the number of correct responses was less, i.e., 30% in females and 20% in males; this was because learners mostly avoid using the auxiliary verb *has*; they used the only *spoiled*. This shows that they have insufficient knowledge about the use of auxiliaries in English grammar. In statement #15, *He dug a hole in the loan yesterday*; the participants have used the forms, like *digs, dug*, etc. for *dug* because they do not know that when in English grammar, we put words like *yesterday, tomorrow, last night*, etc. it shows the time of action and we have to use the verb according to these conditions. Also, in English, there are some specific rules for certain verbs to make their second and third form; for example, we cannot use the general rule of adding –ed for the verbs such as *dig, fly, think*, etc. In dealing with the verb, *I think* the frequency of correct responses was high, i.e., 100%, this is because this verb is commonly used in daily routine. In statement #19, *The bird has flown south for winter*; the frequency of correct responses for males is 80%,
while in females, it is 60%. They have given the wrong answers like a fly, fly, flew, etc. The results show that they have less knowledge about the rule that has, has, and had always take 3rd form of the verb.

The overall results show that 66% of males and 66% of females have answered correctly. The equal frequency of the correct responses shows that both boys and girls acquire regular and irregular verb in a similar order.

**Progressive (-ing) Morpheme**

This part of the discussion deals with the progressive aspect. In English, the progressive aspect shows the continuation of an action in the present or the past. This part of the analysis includes the progress of all the aspects and mood (future).

In the above graph, statement #12, i.e., They have been building the bridge for several months, females gave 30% correct answers, and males gave 40% correct answers. In English, to show the action started in the past and continuing, the present perfect continuous is used that is indicated by the words, for and since. In the current analysis, the incorrect answers for the progressive aspect were high because most students used incorrect forms like building, building, etc. They did not know this English grammar rule and ignored the indicating word for. In statement #21, She is singing now; 30% male and 50% female responses were correct. Mostly, the participants
committed mistakes, like, *sings, singing*, etc., and avoided the use of auxiliary *is*. For the sentence, *He will be meeting us next week*; 30% of correct responses were from the female side and 20% from the male side. This sentence overgeneralized the rule that third person singular took *s/es* and gave incorrect answers like *meets*. Also, males used the word *met* and ignored the condition *next week* that refers to the future action.

Overall, the results show that 32% of correct responses are female, and 30% are male. The low accuracy frequency in boys and girls is due to a lack of knowledge and exposure to the English language.

**Third-person singular (*s/es*) Morpheme**

In English, there is a general rule for the third person singular (he, she, it) that *s/es* will be used for the verb, but there are few spelling rules which cause difficulty for the learners to acquire this rule correctly. For example, modal verbs like *can, should, must, may, might* not take *–s/ -es* in the third person singulars present because modal verbs do not take endings. The following Figure 6 shows the frequency of correct responses for the boys and girls in dealing with the third-person singulars.

For example, in statement#18, *She can speak three languages*; 30% of
Figure 7. Accuracy order of the grammatical morphemes in female

females and 70% males have given correct answers. The participants gave incorrect responses due to the ignorance of the rule mentioned above for modals. For the verb, teach 60% male and 60% female gave correct answers. The researcher observed that the incorrect responses, like teachers, were because of ignorance of the spelling rule of the 3rd person singular s/es. In English, if the base form ends at -s, -sh, -z, -ch, -x, or at the vowel -o, then we have to add -es instead of -s. Moreover, for the statement, *The sun rises in the east*, 70% females and 100% males gave correct responses.

The overall percentage, i.e., 58% correct answers from the female side and 64% correct answers from the male's side, shows a slight difference between the order of acquisition of the third person singular morpheme in males and females.

**Comparison of Accuracy Order of Morphemes in Male and Female**

The comparison between the order of morpheme acquisition of

The overall order of morpheme acquisition for females (adapting Krashen (1977) scheme) is:

```
Regular and irregular verb
Third-person singular s/es
Possessive 's /'
Plural morpheme
Progressive (-ing)
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Figure 8. Accuracy order of the grammatical morphemes in male

male and female students can be made by using the following graph:

The above graph shows that the correct responses of a regular and irregular verb are 66% which means females acquire this morpheme easily. On the other hand, progressive morpheme has the least number of correct responses, i.e., 32% among all morphemes, which means that females face difficulty acquiring this morpheme.

Third-person singular s/es, Possessive ‘s/ ’ and Plural morpheme are placed in the same box because the frequency of these morphemes slightly differs, so this shows that almost all these morphemes are acquired similarly.

This graph shows that the regular and irregular verb has 66% of the correct responses in males, which shows that males acquire this morpheme first. On the other side, plural morpheme shows 22% of correct responses, which reflects that males acquire this morpheme later.

All these morphemes are placed

The order of acquisition of males (adapting Krashen (1977) scheme) is:
Figure 9. The overall accuracy order of the grammatical morphemes
So, the overall order of morpheme acquisition (adapting Krashen (1977) scheme) is:

Regular and irregular → Third-person singular s/es → Possessive ‘s’/’ ’ → Plural morpheme → Progressive (-ing)

in different boxes because the percentages are significantly different and suggest that the males acquire all these morphemes differently.

Overall Order of Accuracy Order of the Grammatical Morphemes

The graph below shows the frequencies of overall accurate responses of the morpheme students of

Table 4. Comparison of morpheme acquisition orders by Dulay and Burt (1973) and Krashen (1977) (adopted from Mohammed & Sanosi, 2018) and the current study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.#</th>
<th>Dulay and Burt (1973)</th>
<th>Krashen (1977)</th>
<th>Present study findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Progressive—ing</td>
<td>Progressive—ing</td>
<td>Regular past/Irregular past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Plural—s</td>
<td>Plural—s</td>
<td>3rd person—s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Regular past/ Irregular past</td>
<td>Irregular past/ Regular past</td>
<td>Possessives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Possessives</td>
<td>3rd person—s</td>
<td>Plural—s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>3rd person—s</td>
<td>Possessives</td>
<td>Progressive—ing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
intermediate level in Muzaffarabad. This shows that firstly, students acquire regular and irregular verbs, then third-person singular morpheme; after this, they acquire possessive morpheme, then plural morpheme, and finally, progressive morpheme.

On comparing the results of the present study with the models of morpheme acquisition in L2 by Dulay and Burt (1973) and Krashen (1977), it was revealed that regardless of the difference in several morphemes analyzed in the present study, there was a significant deviation in the order of acquisition of these morphemes. Following Table 4 shows the comparison of three research findings in three different contexts.

So, it can be concluded from the above comparison that the current research contradicts with previous research of Dulay and Burt (1973) and Krashen (1977), in which the progressive morpheme was acquired first. However, in the current study, it is acquired at last. Similarly, in the current study, regular and irregular past is acquired first, but it was acquired on the 3rd level in the previous studies. Furthermore, this comparison also showed that the order of morpheme acquisition might differ from context to context, and its accuracy percentage also varies from context to context.

**Conclusions**

In the light of present research, it can be concluded that morpheme with high accuracy level among the intermediate students of Muzaffarabad is a regular and irregular verb and morpheme with the lowest accuracy rate is progressive (-ing). This study also suggests that the order of morpheme acquisition in male and female students is different. Females acquire regular and irregular verbs first, and at last, they acquire progressive morpheme while Males acquire regular and irregular verbs first, and at last, they acquire plural morphemes.

However, the current research contradicts Dulay and Burt's (1973) and Krashen's (1977) research concerning grammatical morpheme acquisition. The researcher also observed that learners faced difficulties acquiring these grammatical morphemes correctly due to faulty teaching techniques, lack of knowledge about the grammar rules, overgeneralization, and lack of exposure to the English language.
Recommendations

The current study’s findings suggest that the grammar rules should be taught to students of the English language from the beginning, and the students should get enough exposure to listen and speak the English language. Furthermore, there is a need for classroom activities on basic grammar, and faulty teaching techniques and rote learning must be avoided. Meanwhile, course designers can design lesson plans according to the order of morpheme acquisition after validating the results produced in the present study to facilitate the grammatical morpheme acquisition of EFL/ESL learners. Moreover, further in-depth studies utilizing more (large) sample sizes from different areas can confirm the order generated in the research at hand.

References


