

**Female Children's EFL Learners'
Ability to Respond to Oral Questions in
Iraq: Case Study Based on Relevance
Theory**

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مركز المثنى

For the purpose of this study, researchers sought to investigate the problems of Iraqi children encounter while learning English as a second language (EFL). The study's goal is to determine whether early Iraqi children's capacity to answers oral situational questions and the tactics they use when they are unable to do so have a developmental trend over time. Sperber and Wilson (1995), two linguists who have developed understanding methods, will be used to make an effort at this (1995). When it comes to understanding human communication and comprehension, the authors' theory, dubbed the "Communicative Principle of Relevance," they believe that only this theory can adequately account for the interaction between linguistic meaning as well as the context that occurs during "utterance interpretation". As a dependable linguistic instrument, the theory's validity was also a major focus of the research. Cross-sectional research was used to examine the linguistic and cognitive growth in sixty female pupils aged seven to nine years old at various points in time over the course of the study. Children from the same socioeconomic and private school backgrounds were selected to participate in the study. Story from a series of children's books for EFL learners was used as the primary research tool. Keywords: Learners' Ability; Relevance Theory; pragmatic skills.

Introduction

In our species, the intricacy of communicating among each other has been described as a distinctive feature. Many academics and scientists have been trying to answer the question, "How do humans interact with one other?" (Atkinson, 2019:5). However, there are different methods to describe and explain the communication process among humans. Morley (1992), for example, defines communication as the practice of transferring or imparting information, thoughts, and knowledge (Pagel, 2016:27). The academic community has come up with other definitions of communication. It is the conveyance of knowledge from one entity to another which has been actually referred to as communication. At least two agents must share a repertoire of signals and semiotic norms in order to engage in key indicator interactions (Pittman, 2002:187). Also, communication is a process of conveying thoughts, ideas, and information by voice, writing, or signs among people. However, the simplest, most frequent definition of communication is that it becomes a process through which meaning is given and transferred in an effort to build shared understanding (Perkins, 2013:428). A wide range of interpersonal processing abilities are needed for this process, including the ability to listen, observe, talk, question, analyze, and evaluate. Collaboration and cooperation, according to academics, can only exist when people are able to talk to one another (Wilkins, 2005:151). Three revolutionary phases have been identified in the study of communication's history and transformation. In the early stages of human communication, experts think that pictographs were used in the form of writing (Cachel, 2020:982) They were written on stone, which was too heavy to move. Written communication, according to historians, was not mobile throughout this time period, but it did exist. Writing started to emerge on paper, papyrus, etc. (Seoh et al., 2015:295). In the second phase of the information revolution by established common alphabets to facilitate the homogeneity of the language across long distances. As a tool to trace the impact of communications media, Canadian media-communication researcher Innis (1950) consider communication as one of the main factors of the rise and collapse of historical civilizations (Erard, 2018:324). When it comes to culture and civilization, he examines the role the media plays in influencing society. Many communication academics now believe that effective communication, in general, entails the transmission of information and experiences (Erard, 2018:630). Consequently, you may provide advice and orders, as well as ask questions through communication which is depending on the group's communication skills. These behaviours may take on a variety of shapes. It could be the combination of the message's format and substance that determines whether it reaches its intended recipient or not (Deutsch & Deutsch, 2005:1332-a). In our time teaching English as a second language (EFL), the use of tales and children's literature may have a positive impact on students' language development and motivation to learn, according to many researchers (Deák, 2007:36). Rosen (1988) points out, that every child has an inherent desire to create stories, and a school storytelling culture enhances and expands on that desire (Warren, 2018:512). There are numerous linguistic scholars who believe that children's literature may play an important role in the development of students' second/foreign language abilities, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as the acquisition of vocabulary and grammar skills (Erard, 2017:301). Children's literature has been shown to have a good effect on children's attitudes about learning another language, particularly English. Books designed for English-speaking youngsters, according to Rees (1979), maybe utilized successfully in the EFL curriculum (Khamees, 2015:22). Foreign students like and benefit from the fact that they are listening to a narrative that was written and read by a high level of proficiency, according to Rees (1979) research (p.3). As Rees points out, these

tales' popularity resides in their light-hearted as well as random presentation, devoid of the heavy touch of didacticism (p.3), (Bozorgian&Fallah, 2017:102). Thus, in this study, the researcher intends to add to the EFL curriculum in the area of children's language acquisition new 23 aspects by seeking to identify the problems of communication. As a result, the researcher hopes this study will help Iraqi students' learning techniques and would be improved. Identifying the root causes of these issues can aid in overcoming many of the challenges that children experience while learning English. In addition, this study makes a significant contribution to the EFL field by integrating English tales appropriate for Iraqi children's age as well as attention span into their school curriculum. Aim of The Study The researcher's goal in this research is to understand more about the challenge's children confront while attempting to communicate in a new language. As part of this research, the researchers are looking at whether or not young children's capacity to answer questions and their tactics for dealing with difficulty answering questions have a developmental tendency. Relevance Theory understanding processes children go through while trying to answer questions connected to the context will be tried in this manner. In other words, the current research aims to investigate and explain the Relevance Theory-based process of using context in language understanding as well as production. Research Questions This research aims to address these questions, among others:

1. Is the capacity to answer the inquiries of young children is influenced by their growth.
2. Is there a generational tendency in the tactic's children utilize when they are unable to answer a specific question?
3. Does the Relevance Theory of understanding have developmental validity in a situation like in our study?

Statement of the Problem

It's important to study a foreign language so that you can communicate more successfully in it. The ability of a youngster to answer questions is likely to be affected by a variety of circumstances. Learning a foreign language – specifically English – is essential for fluent communication in that language. Learn a lot of what you need to know about the English language via exercises in the classroom. Instead of the traditional first-language learning methods that rely on direct experience (Dunn, 1994). Children are also pushed to learn English rapidly while maintaining up with the new ideas that are taught in their classrooms every day, according to Dunn. The study's research question is, therefore, to determine what factors contribute to children's difficulty in understanding and, as a result, to their lack of fluency while learning a foreign language – in this case, English. According to the findings, one of the challenges the Iraqi EFL student has is the inability to appropriately use a given context, which leads to incorrect answers to context-related questions. As a result, foreign language understanding and communication might be hindered. significance of the study The current research is essential for a variety of reasons. In order to better understand the problems Iraqi children, confront while learning English as a second language, this research is being conducted. That is tried throughout the research by attempting to uncover the processes these youngsters go through while trying to answer inquiries that offer varying degrees of pragmatic demands. In other words, the research will concentrate on the function of the context in comprehending the foreign language. Different research has tried to address this problem, for instance, Ryder & Leinonen (2001) claimed that, from such an early age, infants are capable to infer meanings by synthesizing information to find out meanings. They promise that this grows more complex with the children's increasing capacity to look beyond the immediate environment and form connections with their global experience and knowledge on the basis of tiny indications. Literature Review To provide the groundwork for this research, the Relevance Theory of Communication and Cognition will be addressed. In their 1986 book, Relevance Communication and Cognition, Sperber and Wilson proposed their hypothesis (Khamees, 2015:372). It took them nine years to issue their revised Second Edition. The book titled: Relevance, Communication, and Cognition, 2nd Edition was utilized in this study. The definition of the theory created by Sperber & Wilson (1986/1995) and a broad explanation of the fundamental pillars of the theory will be discussed in this chapter. Other researchers' definitions of Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory (RT) will next be presented, along with theoretically and empirically investigations that have studied the RT. There will be a discussion of how children learn a second or foreign language, as well as the many studies that have tried to explain this process. Additionally, research on the use of RT in the area of child language learning will be addressed. Relevance Theory Relevance theory was most notably established during the past twenty years by two well-known linguistics, Dan Sperber in Paris and Deirdre Wilson in London. This branch of pragmatics studies the contextual and inferential components of linguistic communication, specifically how what is merely inferred in a statement helps to decide the meaning of what is clearly said (Wearing, 2014:87). Relevance theory

additionally connects language to actuality through psychological mechanisms of human cognition that are thought to be universal since it is based on how the human brain operates while processing language (Diorio, 1977:52). Sperber and Wilson (S & W) (1995) provide a novel approach to the analysis of human communication, arguing that "to communicate is to demand an individual's attention: thus to communicate is to indicate that the information transmitted is significant" (Preface)(Trotter, 1992:17) The co-authors, Sperber and Wilson, founded their thesis on the basic concept that conveyed knowledge comes with a guarantee of relevance (Nitzschner, 2021:226). They referred to this theory as the Communicative Principles of Relevance, which they say is fundamental in describing human communication since it accounts for the combination of language meaning and contextual elements in utterance interpretation (Clark, 2012:9). Relevance Theory and Human Communication In considerations of the definition of the term 'relevance' within their theory, S & W assert that they were attempting to construct a theoretical notion of relevance for use in the study of communication as well as cognition (Abdel-Raheem, 2018:19). It is our belief that this theoretical idea will assist us forecast people's intuitions, although not necessarily their usage of the word relevant or other common language words. To put it another way, "relevance" in this context does not signify what it means to us in the context of our daily lives, but rather a theoretical idea that may be used in the science of human communication (Franken, 1998:59). According to these authors, however, the phrase should not be confused with its much more widespread meaning of making intentional decisions about whether or not a statement is relevant to one's interests once it has been comprehended (Campbell, 1992:145). They define 'relevance,' thus, as the objective of a mental process by which an utterance's significance is formed in the mind by spreading 'neural activation,' which is an unconscious process. (p.119). A single general criterion is believed by the co-authors to govern the hearer's evaluation of several alternative interpretations when communicating. This criterion, which is clear and forceful enough to eliminate all but one interpretation, is anything but the Principle of Relevance, which is the core of the Relevance Theory (Piskorska, 2017:8). According to Sperber and Wilson (1995), the Idea of Relevance is defined as 'the principle that every statement establishes an expectation of relevance' (p.155) They use this idea as a foundation for their knowledge of how people communicate. As a result, they hold that when someone speaks, it is naturally assumed that what they have to say is meaningful to the recipient (Jacobson, 2003:89). If an assumption is relevant in a given context, it must have some influence on that context, according to their definition of "relevance" (p.122). According to S & W, this statement expresses the intuition that an assumption must be connected to the context in some manner in order to be relevant (Dai, 2011:18). Therefore, they highlight that their theory does not seek to thoroughly describe the idea of 'relevance' in daily usage, but rather demonstrates a fascinating and vital component of human communication (Smeltzer & Suchan, 1991:186). Principle of Relevance There are two fundamental assumptions, one concerning cognition and the other about communication, in their Principle of Relevance

1. Human cognition is orientated toward the maximizing of relevance.
2. "Every act of ostensive communications transmits a presupposition of its own ideal relevance" (Konstantareas, 1985:83). Instead of adhering to the coding model of language, RT has moved to cognitive psychology ideas. The co-authors' linguistic argument that "a fundamental aspect among most human communication is the expressing and identification of intents" is examined in full here (Foster-Cohen, 2004:293). This inferential model assumes that a communicator "presents evidence of his/her purpose to transmit a given meaning, which would be reduced by the listener on the basis of empirical knowledge supplied by the communicator (Thomason & Hopper, 1992:432). As a result, relevance is seen by S & W as being relative or subjective, depending on the hearer's level of knowledge at the time a statement is encountered. Since the topic, "What is the nature and importance of context??" is one of the most pressing issues in communication studies today, RT has gained a lot of attention in the field (Jary, 1998:18). When we say "context," we don't just mean "the situation's context" or "the listener's set of preconceptions about the universe". In the words of S & W, context is a broad and theoretically infinite notion that encompasses any and all human assumptions (Wilson & Sperber, 2015:32). Assumptions based on knowledge concerning the immediate surroundings or previous statements are possible, they claim. Many of these views are based on personal experiences, such as anecdotal recollections, cultural assumptions, especially assumptions concerning the speaker's mental state (Yi et al., 2020:1131). Even the effectiveness of communication is said to be highly dependent on whether or not a listener considers the speaker's intended context when determining what an utterance means. A subset of an individual's previous beliefs forms the context wherein new assumptions are processed, leading to a range of contextual consequences (Yus Ramos, 1998:294). As a

result, they argue that the appropriate choice of 'contextual assumptions' will lead to the logical conclusion of the desired implication. Assumptions that are incorrect might lead to misunderstood or even non-existent communication (Jacobson, 2003:89). Empirical Studies of Relevance Theory Relevance Theory, on the other hand, has been the subject of several empirical research. Those investigations have shown that the theory is a highly dependable and effective method for studying and interpreting the language we use in learning and communicating (Bontempi, 2002:219). Heltoft & Geist (1984) try to examine the language used in a newspaper story using the Relevance Theory. A newspaper article on "economic politics," or more particularly, the devaluation of the Danish krone, is examined in the three items in this newspaper (Lyons, 1996:35). All of the studies investigate some aspect of the language employed in the article's composition, whether it is a linguistic or structural component. Specific attention is paid to relevance theory and relevance in the article (Bilz, 2016:359). The use of text analysis to look at the relevance, as the function of the language used in the article. Direct evidence is presented to back up Relevance Theory as a viable explanation for the outcomes of this study (Luther & Cohen, 2013:125). However, Haegeman (1989) tries to provide some illumination on the choosing of "future time expressions in English tense" use. The Relevance Theory of utterance comprehension is used to reinterpret descriptions of time consumption statements in his research. Finally, the outcomes of this study have possible implications for relevance theory as a retrieval method for information (Kharkhurin, 2012:177). There are many methods to employ "telling" in the classroom to develop the relationship between the instructor and the student and to enhance learning, according to Delahunty's paper, "Whole Teaching: Performative Acts in Good Faith" (1989) The study presents a formal description of "telling" inspired by the work of "cognitive science" and "speech-act theory". Theorists provide an intuitive reason for employing "telling" as a teaching modality in community college classrooms (Polat, 2018:182). Jurgen Habermas, the originator of "universal pragmatics," and Dan Sperber, who created the broad "relevance" theory of communication, are among these philosophers. To communicate effectively, the speaker must "make apparent" his/her desire to affect the listener's "conceptual context" (Hong, 2019:219). Furthermore, this demonstration of purpose ("ostension") is necessary for the meaningful transaction to take place. "Ostension" and "telling" are discussed in Delahunty's work before instances of performative instruction is provided (Schmitz, 2001:43) Between 1986 and 1988, such happened in classes at Northampton Community College in Pennsylvania. Using conversations between students and instructors in classrooms where students are being interrogated, (Andrejevic, 2008:611) teachers demonstrate disclosure, effective listening, restatement, and teaching in the context of questioning learners. Conclusions suggest that the goal of all "telling" is to help others comprehend. They deviate based on the needs of the course material and their own cognitive environments from this point of common ground (Sansone, 2015:7). Foreign Language Education for Children The study's emphasis is on explaining the processes that youngsters go through while learning a new language. It is important to review the ideas and research that have sought to explain how children develop or learn a language in general, and a different language in particular (Ginsberg, 1960:22). According to the literature, comprehensive knowledge of how a kid learns his first language L1 might disclose not only how L1 is learned but also how his second/foreign language L2, as well as FL, are learned (Hult, 2018:37). As a result, better teaching strategies will be developed, allowing students to learn languages more effectively. Most linguists interchange the terms "language learning" and "language acquisition." (Gu, 2012:139). When it isn't addressing how formal vs. non-formal learning is defined, then it isn't research on language acquisition. We'll use some ideas from the field of child language acquisition to our efforts to help children learn their own native language (Lange, 1972:248). Many theories have been proposed to explain how a child picks up a language, whether it's his native tongue or a second/foreign language. In one theory, a child's ability to communicate via language is different from an adult's because of their developing brains (Clay, 2021:129). According to another school of thought, a child's brain is more malleable. One more school of thought holds that learning a language is predetermined from birth and that only a certain set of neurological factors and an unspecified amount of linguistic input are required during an essential period of brain lateralization during which language specialization occurs for learning to take place (Abdel-Raheem, 2018:12). The Language Acquisition Device (LAD) The conceptual issue of children's language development, that is, how acquisition occurs, has been clarified by Chomsky's Universal Grammar (UG) and the intrinsic language learning system. While both human children and a kitten are competent in logical deduction. Chomsky (1981) found that while both are capable of understanding and producing language, the human kid will always be able to do so, while the kitten will never be able to do so (Briscoe, 2000:248). Chomsky used the term "Language Acquisition Device" to refer to whatever relevant aptitude humans possess but cats do

not (LAD). As stated by Chomsky, a learner's LAD processes information and generates output automatically (O'Grady, 2011:125). There are certain universal laws of language pre-programmed into a child's brain, according to Noam Chomsky's hypothesis. It is these universal traits that he refers to as the Universal Grammar (UG). A set of principles, circumstances, and procedures that are common to all human languages is referred to as the UG by Chomsky (1975, p.28). In Chomsky's view, this program is what enables a child to acquire a language so fast in the first four or five years of his life. Human language performance is Chomsky's main focus in his 1965 research, which deals with how humans employ our linguistic abilities in speaking, production, and understanding (Hulstijn, 2002:272). According to Chomsky, this theory was designed to provide an explicit and full explanation of the individual's linguistic knowledge, but it is not sufficient to specify how speech should be generated. However, he argues that the human mind is capable of accessing this reservoir of knowledge to speak and comprehend language in real-time (Smith, 1975:98). It is true that an acceptable model of language usage should include the speaker-knowledge hearer's of the language in its generative grammar as a key component, but this generative grammar does not, in itself, specify a perceptual model's character or function (Krashen, 1983:43). The Critical Period Hypothesis The concept of the CPH, which considers language acquisition from a biological standpoint, has been a continuous discussion in language learning and language acquisition for decades. An individual's initial few years of life (till puberty) are critical for learning a language successfully when given enough stimulus, according to the CPH (Bziker, 2019:1). Until this point, the person will never have a complete mastery of the language, particularly its grammatical structures, unless language input occurs. Wilder Penfield, a neurologist, and co-author Lamar Roberts postulated the CPH in their 1959 study, "speech and Brain Mechanisms" (Jackson & Birdsong, 2000:89). Researchers have shown that children who experience brain damage in the speech region of the cerebral cortex before puberty often recover and regenerate normal language, but adults seldom recover entirely and frequently do not return to their pre-injury level of verbal ability more than five months after the injury (Singleton & Leśniewska, 2021:56). Penfield and Roberts claim the following about us: "In order to understand what is being said, the upper brain stem and the left temporal-parietal-occipital" area interact with auditory impulses from both hemispheres (Du, 2010:12). During the process of reading, visual impulses from both hemispheres and the upper brain stem are combined with impulses from the lower temporal-parietal-occipital area of the left temporal cortex "As a matter of fact. Those who believe puberty causes the left hemisphere of the brain, which is responsible for language processing, to lose its flexibility claim that this is why children lose their capacity to acquire and speak a language fluently beyond that point (Yus Ramos, 1998:302) They claim that when this happens, the brain loses its flexibility and the capacity to change and reorganize, making it difficult to acquire a new language (Wilson & Sperber, 2015:34). As a result, both hypotheses agree that youngsters have a neurological advantage when it comes to learning languages, and also that puberty corresponds with a turning point in capacity (Yi et al., 2020:1125). They claim that the majority of children's language development happens during their early years of life. Furthermore, his theory incorporates Penfield's understanding of the brain's communicative function (Wearing, 2014:94). As he sees it, the communication process reveals how the brain's processes enable a speaker to pick the right symbols for his thoughts in order to convey them to others. These words have the effect of causing a listener to internalize what he has heard, resulting in an action or a new set of words. Methodology In principle, there are various approaches that may be used while examining children's language development. One approach is to capture analyze, and recordings of children's speech to see how new linguistic patterns develop. A further option is to create experimental settings where kids do different activities requiring speech production or understanding. Adults' motherese or caregiver speech, when employed with children, is likewise subjected to analysis. defined by the condensing and simplification of words) and by the way in which they interact (Fernald, 1987). Single children may be examined for longer periods of time as part of the research (longitudinal studies). It might also be a case when different groups of people are examined at the same time and in the same place (cross-sectional studies). It's important to note that in this study, the researchers used a cross-sectional strategy to examine the pragmatic skills of a sample of children from various age groups. Study Sample A total of sixty Iraqi female children took part in this research. All of the children taking part in this project are Arabic speaking, and they are all studying English as a second language at their school. Most of them had some exposure to English in their early years of schooling. As a result, all of the participants have the same language heritage. Furthermore, since research has shown that children can communicate well in stressful situations between the ages of six to ten, the age of the participants was within that range. In this way, the sixty student participants were separated into three

age categories: seven, eight, and nine. The children that were selected were in the first, second, and third grades, correspondingly. The interview took place at the conclusion of the second semester in 2020. Participants were chosen at random from various different regions of the school. First graders were recruited from four sections: 1A, 1B, 1C, and 1D, with five children from each part chosen for the first group. Similarly, the second and third graders were given the same method as described by Tabl.1. **TABLE 1.**

Class	No. of cases	Age range		Mean of Age
		Minimum	Maximum	
1	15	6.5	7.7	7.1
2	15	7.5	8.6	8.2
3	15	8.6	9.5	9.2
4	15	7.4	8.7	7.6
Total	60	6.6	9.4	8.3

The students were from the Al-Noor private school in Baghdad. The research was conducted at a private school in Iraq since English is studied as a foreign language to students in this age range in private schools. It was also necessary to ensure that all participants were of comparable socioeconomic status since they were all selected from the same good private school. As a result, the study was conducted only at one school in order to control variables, even though the study's focus is on testing the relevance theory as well as its clarification of how communication occurs with regards to the different age and intellectual abilities rather than comparing or contrasting EFL students' development in various schools. In addition, the school selected is one that involves reading in its English course, especially stories recommended for EFL learners, in order to successfully apply the study. Since this is empirical research, only one school will be selected to participate. Material and procedures This research is based on the Relevance Theory of Communication and Cognition, developed by Dan Sperber and Dierdre Wilson (1995) (RTCC). In this study, an across-sectional approach was used. The purpose is to compare the verbal and cognitive development of a group of seven to nine-year-olds at a certain moment in time. Textbooks for the research were taken from Houghton Mifflin's Reading Delights, a popular collection for elementary school students. Houghton Mifflin Company released the book in 2003. The book series was intended for use in primary school classrooms by English-speaking native speakers. This book is ideal for children and youngsters who are learning English as a second language (EFL) or who are just starting to read on their own. As a result, these books have been accepted by many EFL schools throughout the globe. There are a variety of engaging topics covered, as well as activities, illustrations, and even a glossary that is presented in an easy-to-understand style. In addition, it is shown in a way that appeals to young students. Children were tested one at a time, in a quiet area of the school, while the narrative was read to them one-on-one. Students were not aware that the sessions had been filmed, which allowed them to be more open and honest throughout the readings and discussions that followed. After the child entered the reading room, the researcher initially presented his name and occupation to break the ice. After getting the students' names and ages, I asked whether they liked tales and which ones they preferred, all the while keeping a warm smile and making eye contact. Before beginning the reading, the researcher explains to the kid why he is here (to read and assess the narrative, not the student). Students were encouraged to read aloud using double-faced photographs of the text, and sections that appeared to confuse or frighten them were read again. There were about 20 to 25 minutes of reading time in each of the reading sessions. Intermittently throughout the reading process, the researcher will pause to ask research questions about the text. The study's three sorts of questions were **reference**, **enrichment**, and **implication** were all included in the questions given to the girls. Using Sperber and Wilson's RT, this pragmatic research will investigate the issues Iraqi female children face in their daily lives As EFL learners, this has a direct impact on their ability to comprehend and communicate in English. Using the Relevance Theory, we will examine their capacity or inability to respond to oral, context-related inquiries. The Test's Procedures followed in this study To ensure that the oral-testing sessions went well and that the kid did not feel anxious about being tested. Before the children entered the testing room, the tape-recorder was switched on and hidden beneath the table in a location that the student would not have seen. The following steps were included in each of the testing sessions:

1. Each oral session began with a cordial dialogue between the researcher and the student, e.g., the researcher introduced himself first, his name, and his occupation as an English instructor. then inquired about the student's name and grade level, whether or not she was a fan of tales, and which stories she enjoyed the most.

2. The researcher next presents the title of the tale to be heard and informs the student that he wishes to know whether or not the narrative appeals to her.
3. Students are informed before they begin reading by the researcher that they will be asked a series of easy questions. That necessitates a response, and she is free to request a re-read if she feels the question or passage should be repeated.
4. A double-faced image of the narrative was utilized while the researcher was reading the story in order to enhance comprehension and to provide a fun factor to the reading.
5. A typical testing session lasted between 20 and 25 minutes per participant.

The questions that were asked to the students

Intermittently throughout the reading process, participants were asked three questions from each of the following categories: "reference questions, enrichment questions, and implication questions". There was a variable degree of difficulty associated with each kind of question.

1. Enrichment Questions: The child was obliged to extend the explicit information to include all of the propositional meaning it could possibly have. Because the learner is simply needed to utilize the immediate context presented before the question to improve her response, these questions involve a moderate degree of pragmatic difficulty. Similarly, the images in the stories helped to corroborate the answers to enrichment questions. For instance, following reading the question 'What did the two sides argue about'.

2. Implicature Questions:

To get at an implicature, the children must participate in the kinds of understanding processes outlined previously in an attempt to address this particular form of a question. This form of inquiry poses the greatest practical challenge to the student since the student must utilize all of the story's preceding context to draw a conclusion or an "implicature." For instance, after reading: "Two poles were placed up at either end of the field as goalposts," the question was "How did the story begin?" was presented. In order to arrive at an implicature, i.e. the solution to this particular question, the learner must do a series of pragmatic calculations that include all of the information previously provided in the tale.

3. Reference Questions:

After reading the paragraph, the student was asked to clarify clearly to whom or what a pronoun referred to? In all instances, the reference was clear in the text and reinforced by the images in the tale. Students will have the easiest time answering these questions since they provide the least amount of practical difficulties. There is no requirement for the learner to do any comprehension processes or computations beyond referencing the story's most recent preceding context. For example, after reading the sentence: "Long ago the Birds and Animals had a fantastic argument," the question was posed: "Who had a great argument?" In this scenario, the teacher read the text and asked the reference question while the kid was gazing at an image of birds and animals. Similarly, worded reference questions were posed to the remaining candidates. Result and Discussion The results of the research have been analyzed using a variety of statistical methodologies. The (ANOVA) statistic, or the analysis of variance, is one of the most widely used tests by the researcher. The test may be used to determine whether the means of several groups are statistically equal, and as a result, it extends the t-test beyond two groups. When comparing two, three, or more means, ANOVA is utilized. TABLE (2): ANOVA for the Age Difference in Percentage of Correct Answers

Type of question	Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Reference	Between Groups	825.84	2	362.77	1.31	0.421 (Not. S.)
	Within Groups	21501.33	46	277.19		
Enrichment	Between Groups	1714.95	2	808.37	1.17	0.382 (Not. S.)
	Within Groups	44061.39	57	690.51		
Implicature	Between Groups	7164.33	2	4031.85	4.38	0.021 (0.05)

Within Groups	52741.29	56	825.86
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The (Tukey) test was used to determine the root cause of these discrepancies. The Tukey test, sometimes known as the 'Tukey's range test,' is a common follow-up test for ANOVA results, Table 2. The majority of the time, the test compares each group's mean to the mean of every other subgroup mean. Post hoc tests, as opposed to predetermined tests, are those that are conducted after the data has been examined. Tukey's test is one of these posthoc tests. According to the data shown in the Table . 3 below, there are significant variations between the performance of the seven and nine-year-old groups. TABLE (3): There is a Tukey test for the age-related difference in the percentage of right answers in multiple-range tests.

Age	Mean	7 YRS	8 YRS	9 YRS	Difference in Favour of awareness
7 YRS	19.56				
8 YRS	41.63				
9 YRS	45.68	Significant			9 YRS

Other than age and question type, outcomes may be regarded as a consequence of both as explained in the Table 4 below. TABLE (4): Age and Question Type Influence Correct Answer Percentage:

Age	Type of	Correct answers	
		No	Percentage
7 YRS	Reference	52	84.89
Enrichment	36	61.63	
Implicature	12	19.34	
8 YRS	Reference	45	74.69
Enrichment	36	61.69	
Implicature	24	36.64	
9 YRS	Reference	46	76.67
Enrichment	43	72.16	
Implicature	29	48.62	

The total proportion of accurate responses produced by all age groups was much higher than the number of erroneous replies, which will be discussed further in the research. Furthermore, the proportion of right responses seems to grow with age. The seven-year-olds provided the most incorrect responses to the most difficult questions (Implicature questions).

Seven years, on the other hand, had the rightist responses to the questions that were the least difficult to answer pragmatically. As a result, there is no discernible issue with this particular form of the question, namely "the Reference questions".

Reference questions were answered by eighth and ninth graders in a manner that was very comparable. The seven-year-old pragmatic abilities emerged in "the Enrichment questions", which lie in the middle of the other two categories of questions.

In terms of the three categories of questions, the eight-year-olds followed a similar pattern to the seven-year-olds. With the exception of the fact that the most challenging pragmatic question type is the one where the greatest improvement in pragmatic ability may be found (Implicature questions).

It also reveals an upward or downward tendency in the two age groups. A similar pattern of growth was also seen in the nine-year-olds, who were compared to the two other age groups. In response, they demonstrated a developmental tendency by eliciting more right answers than the eight-year-olds for the Implicature questions.

Each age group had the rightist responses to "Reference assignment questions". In contrast to the other question categories, the Reference questions evoked a slightly different pattern when compared across age groups.

Reference questions yielded a larger percentage of accurate responses from the seven-year-olds than from the "eight- and nine-year-olds", who in turn generated almost the same percentage of right answers. This change was statistically insignificant, notwithstanding this.

A possible explanation is that children's pragmatic skills grow with maturity, according to the study. Because, in accordance with Sperber and Wilson's hypothesis, as we get older, we become capable of doing more complex contextual processing.

Increased pragmatic skills are a result of this. Reference questions were simple to answer because of the child's unwillingness to let them interfere with his or her answers. As a result, the eight and nine-year-olds are impacted by the development of their pragmatic skills. These pragmatically least difficult sort of inquiries, Reference questions, lead to their inaccurate replies.

In this research, we hypothesized that the capacity of nine, eight -, and seven-year-olds to answer questions with increasing levels of pragmatic/contextual complexity would follow a developmental trend. As we become older, our brains are able to handle more complex contexts.

In the Reference assignment problems, Sperber and Wilson's procedures of understanding seem to be genuine. For each age group, the most straightforward questions yielded the most accurate responses. In contrast, the fewest people were able to correctly answer the most difficult questions, known as implicature questions.

Conclusion

This research sought to discover developmental tendencies in young children's capacity to answer questions. Following the Theory of Relevance, these question kinds were created to explore processes that impose distinct pragmatic demands on the kid. These mechanisms seem to evolve between the ages of seven and nine, according to a developmental tendency.

There are clear developmental tendencies in young children's capacity to answer questions, therefore verifying the first premise of this research. In this research, however, certain overarching tendencies emerged in the children's incorrect-answer tactics. The study noted that the child's method was connected to the question's pragmatic difficulty and age. For example, the seven-year-olds incorrect responses to the Reference assignments questions show a strong dependence on visual information.

In Enrichment questions, however, visual dependence declined with age. For global knowledge/experience, the nine-year-old used this method more for Implicature questions and less for Enrichment and Reference questions. These data support the study's second premise that children's tactics for answering questions change throughout time.

The data also support the study's final premise, that the Relevance theory's understanding processes have developmental validity. When it came to Reference questions, seven-year-olds had a tiny edge over the other two age groups, but they still outperformed the other two age groups.

Owing to their lack of reliance on the visual and their inclination to guess what occurred next based on their world knowledge or experience, the nine-year-olds sometimes gave wrong answers. However, the nine-year-olds were able to understand the tale context more than the eight-year-olds, which may have led to some wrong replies.

In this sense, S & W's postulated comprehension mechanisms seem to be developmentally valid. Younger children employ more world information in their replies, and do better on Implicature questions, suggesting that increased capacity to integrate context awareness may have a trade-off impact when answering questions. When presented with the pragmatically tough Implicature questions, the older students sought to rely on their world knowledge.

This shows that in addition to possessing the knowledge foundation to answer the question (knowledge of bird migration in the winter, for example), the capacity to process as well as integrate contextual information is growing. The researcher argues that a variety of variables influence children's fluency, or their capacity to speak successfully in a foreign language, in this instance English.

The inability to use a given context appropriately, and hence the inability to answer context-related questions accurately, is one of the issues faced by Iraqi EFL learners. The challenges kids confront may lead to language understanding and communication issues, according to the study. In order to properly communicate in a foreign language, a child's ability to answer questions may vary.

As a result, the researcher conducted this study in an effort to better understand the communication challenges Iraqi children confront as they acquire the English language. The research also attempted to see whether there is a developmental tendency in young children's capacity to answer questions and their tactics for answering questions.

The "Relevance Theory of Communication and Cognition" by Sperber and Wilson aimed to concentrate on comprehension processes. Children get through the "comprehension processes" when answering context-related questions, underlining the importance of context in understanding. Thus, this empirical research sought to determine if the Relevance Theory of language comprehension offers a viable and appropriate paradigm for studying Iraqi children's question understanding.

The data obtained from the respondents were examined and compared using the RT's assumptions to discover answers to the study's questions. The research sought to address the following questions:

1. Is it possible to discern developmental changes in children's capacity to respond to questions?
2. To what extent does a tendency emerge in the ways in which kids deal with difficulty answering questions as they grow?
3. Is the Relevance Theory's understanding of comprehension developmentally plausible?

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