The Influence of Mother Tongue on Learning English Language by Arab Learners

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Abstract- This description is a record of literature review whereby the finder explored previous studies and art objects of research conducted to analyze the negative effects of Arabic language interference to learning English. It discusses the definitions and classification of errors committed by Arabic speakers in using English. The errors are explained on the basis of 'principles of unassertive dialect language transfer'. It also aims at pinpointing the differences between Arabic and English and how these differences make Arab learners to commit mistakes at different linguistic levels. The writer explains the types of syntactic, lexical, and morphological errors made by the Arab learners of English as quoted from previous literature. A mistake in forming tenses, relative clauses, adverbs, adjectives, nouns, and articles were listed. A batch of object lessons was applied to illustrate these errors.

At the conclusion of the current report, the researcher listed recommendations as a contribution to guide the English as a second language instructor on what might be regarded good pedagogical strategies and techniques to share with their students' mistakes.

Index Terms- Mother Tongue; Second Language; Contrastive Analysis.

I. INTRODUCTION

It is an admitted fact that technology development in this age of globalization is a great reason to make the whole world as a small village. This compels on every person to learn at least a second/ foreign language in order to be in contact with other people from different countries and nationalities. Many people encounter many challenges of learning a foreign language, since their first language is the best to express themselves in any situation.

1(i). Mother Tongue

Usually, the term (mother tongue) is used to refer as a child first language. It is the primary language that is revealed to the surrounding of a child after he/she is born. As time goes on, this language subconsciously help the child to develop further in reading, writing and speaking it fluently. Mother tongue helps a child to communicate with others by expressing their feelings, emotions and needs. It is also known as native language. Furthermore, it reveals one's identity and nationalities, and it differentiates people from their country of origins.

Ashworth (1992) states that *mother tongue* is the language which the child/person acquires in early years and which naturally becomes his/her means of thought and communication.

1(ii). Second Language

According to online dictionary second language as "a language other than the mother tongue that a person or community uses for public communication, especially in trade, higher education and administration" (The Free Dictionary by Farlex). Another definition of the second language in the same dictionary is "a non-native language officially recognised and adopted in a multilingual country as a means of public communication." The second language is also called the target language. According to Ashworth (1992) second language is a language acquired by a person in addition to her mother tongue.

1.(iii). Contrastive analysis

Contrastive analysis is concerned with a systematic comparison of a pair of languages with the purpose of bringing the light to their phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical differences and similarities. Contrastive analysis is a method that used extensively to find out and explain why some features of a foreign language were more difficult to learn than other. The learner who comes in contact with another language of his/her mother tongue will discover some features of it far easy to learn and others excessively difficult. Lado (1957, p. 2) says that those elements of a foreign language that are similar to the learner's native language will be simple for the learner to learn. Whereas, those elements of a foreign language that are different to the learner's native language will be difficult for him/her to acquire.

In this respect, it is useful to distinguish between Arabic and English languages through contrastive analysis. Arabic is a plant of Semitic languages, whereas English is an Indo-European language primarily originated from the Anglo Frisian dialects.

As for the number of alphabets, Arabic has twenty-eight letters.

"Hamza" the glottal stop has sometimes led the twenty ninth letters. In contrast, English has twenty six letters. Orthographically, there is no distinction between upper letters and lower case letters in Arabic as it is always composed in a cursive form. According to English, the matter is different. In English, at that place is a clear distinction between upper case alphabetic characters and lower case alphabetic characters. English words can be written in both cursive and uncial. One of the most noticeable differences between the two speeches is that Arabic is written from right to left. English, on the other hand, is written from left to right. Most significantly, there are typical

differences between Arabic and English in almost all syntactical, morphological, phonological, lexical, semantic, rhetorical and orthographical aspects. (Ali, 2007:3).

In all the above mentioned differences between Arabic and English languages cause Arab learners unconsciously or involuntarily to make mistakes or even errors. It should be recalled here, it is beneficial to differentiate errors from mistakes. Ellis (1997) stated that errors reflect gaps in the learner's knowledge; they occur because the learner does not know what is correct. Whereas, mistakes reflect occasional lapses in performance; they occur because, in a particular instance, the learner is unable to perform what he or she knows.

In this current literature review, a bulk of previous studies has been delineated and studied according to their findings to determine differences between Arabic and English that causes Arab learners of English to make mistakes in their English learning process in relation to the aspects of James' taxonomy.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2(i). *Misuse of Singularity, Duality and Plurality of nouns*

In a study by Salimi (2013: 131) on morphological errors in noun system between Arabic and English, their findings reveal that

English nouns have two numbers: singular and plural. Whereas, Arabic nouns have threenumbers: singular, dual and plural. The plural is also of two kinds: sound plural (masculine and feminine) and broken plural. In contrast to English, Arabic syntax has singular, dual, and plural for feminine and masculine nouns. Salimi's study also revealed that English has three genders: masculine, feminine, and neuter. Gender is only limited to personal pronouns, whereas Arabic has only two genders: masculine and feminine. Furthermore, English nouns are inflected for genitive case. Whereas, in Arabic, nouns are inflected for three events, namely, nominative, accusative, and possessive.These fonts are differentiated by changing the vowel ling of the final consonant.

Founded on the researcher's knowledge and experience in teaching English to Arab scholars, the following lessons can be rendered to illustrate Salimi's findings.
In Arabic, we suppose:

➢   *Mu'allim*(Singular masculine) / *Mu'allma* (singular feminine)
➢   *Mu'allimuun* (plural masculine) / *Mu'allimein* (dual masculine)
➢   *Mu'allimat* (plural feminine)
➢   *Mu'alimataan; Mu'allimatayin; (dual feminine; acting as: subject and aim.*

In English, we say: Teacher (feminine and masculine) / teachers (dual/plural for feminine and masculine).

Therefore, about Arab students learning English may not use English plural nouns correctly.Rather, they use numbers to indicate a duality or plurality. The following are examples. They may say, "The two child are crying." Others may misuse the noun after numbers because in Arabic a singular noun is used after numbers "three –ten'. Thus, the beginner Arab students learning English may say, "He has eleven cousin." Or "There are 21 student in my class."

2(ii). Countable and Uncountable Nouns

There are certain words in English which are classified as uncountable nouns like (information, money, damage, housework, and equipment) but they can be counted in Arabic. So Arab learners of English tend to pluralize them and use plural verbs after them. The following are examples of students' versions:

➢   The informations I received were useful.
➢   As housewives do a lot of housework.
➢   I bought many equipments.

2(iii). Misuse of Prepositions

Essberger (2000) notes differences between Arabic and English prepositions:

➢   The number of prepositions in Arabic is limited: *min* (from), *„ila* (to), *'an* (about), *' alla* (on,over), *ba/bi* (by, with), *la /li* (of , for), and *fi* (in, into).

➢   In Arabic, some adverbs can be used as prepositions, such as: *khalfa* (behind), *amam* (in front), bayna (between), and many others.

➢   In English, there are approximately 150 prepositions.

The problems in using English prepositions for Arab students learning English result from two factors. First, not every Arabic preposition has a definite equivalent in English and vice versa. Secondly, not every English or Arabic preposition has definite usage and meaning.

Arab students learning English sometimes make the following errors in using English prepositions (Hamadalla and Tushyeh, n.d.; Zughoul, 1973).
1.   Unnecessary insertion: They use prepositions with words which do not need prepositions.

➢   Incorrect   : I will practice on making the exercises.
➢   Correct : I will practice doing the exercises.

2.   Omission of necessary prepositions: They omit these prepositions from words which need them.
➢   Incorrect   : I waited the bus two hours.
➢   Correct : I waited for the bus two hours.
3.   Wrong substitution: They do not use correct prepositions: The preposition "on" is used in places of "over", "above", "at",   and "onto".

Arab learners of English tend to say "ashamed from, composed from, object on, blame on, where (of, of, to and for) should be used respectively.

➢   We were interested with the film. "*nahnu istamta'na bilfilm."*

The misuse of the preposition "with" instead of "in" in the above example occurs because it is equivalent to the Arabic preposition "bi" – which indicates the meaning of "with".

Table 1 below displays some errors in the use of prepositions that are made by Arab learners who are learning English, with their equivalents in Arabic. (Hamadalla and Tushyeh, n.d.; Zughoul, 1973)

Table 1:*Errors in the use of prepositions made by Arab ESL learners*

Errors in English	Arabic equivalents
He jumped on the wall. (over)	*qafaza 'alla aljedar.*
We sat on the table. (at)	*nahnu jalasna 'alla atawela.*
I will come in 7 o"clock. (at)	*anna sawfa atti fi alsa'ati alsabe'a.*
I like to pick roses with many colors. (of) He died from hunger. (of)	*'ohibbu „ann altaqeta wardan bi'edati alwan.* *huwa Matta minaljuu'.*
We have lived in Doha from 1975. (since)	*nahnu na'eesh fi aldoha min sanat 1975.*
One from my brothers is a doctor. (of	*wahed min ikhwati tabeeb.*

2(iv). Misuse of Definite Article

Arabic has one definite article "the". It consists of two letters: "al". It is sequestered to the beginning of nouns and their adjectives.Nevertheless, Arabic has no indefinite articles.The definite article is redundantly used by Arab learners of English with nouns that need the definite article in Arabic but not in English.There are three types of errors in the use of articles by the Arabic-speaking scholars of English (Diab, 1996).

1.   Deletion of the definite article

➢   Incorrect   :   <u>Arms</u> of soldiers are guns and daggers.
➢   Correct :   The arms of soldiers are guns and daggers.

In the above sentence, the definite article "the" should be used before "arms", but has been dropped because it is not used in Arabic, as it is in the genitive case.

2.   Deletion of the indefinite article "a".

➢   Incorrect   :   My father works <u>in bank.</u>
➢   Correct :   My father works in a bank

In the this sentence, the indefinite article "a" should be used before the noun "bank" in English; but it is dropped, possibly because in Arabic such article is non-actual.

3.   Wrong Insertion: Arab students tend to use "the" before nouns which are not normally preceded by this definite article, such as the names of most diseases, names of days, names of some situations, and in many idiomatic expressions.The cause for this is that in Arabic such nouns are usually introduced by the definite article.In English, abstract words referring to ideas, properties, or qualities are employed without the article 'the'. In Arabic, however, such abstract words are preceded by the definite article equivalent to 'the' in English. (Diab, 1996). The following are examples of INCORRECT sentences which have been formed by Arabic-speaking scholars of English.

➢   <u>The happiness</u> doesn't come from the money.
➢   People can work in the agriculture or in <u>the industry.</u>
➢   He went to <u>the Doha</u>.
➢   He is still in <u>the bed.</u>
➢   My father suffers from <u>the cancer</u>.
➢   He was filled with <u>the sadness</u>.
➢   He studies <u>the music</u>.
➢   He works in <u>the agriculture</u>.
➢   When <u>the evil</u> comes, people will die.

The *Correct* forms of all the above sentences should be without the use of the definite article "The"

2(v).   Adjectives and Adverbs

Arab learners of English encounter many difficulties while distinguishing between adjectives and adverbs in Arabic and English. Arabic adjectives agree in gender and number with nouns, which might be the reason for these learners to make mistakes. (Marpaung, 2014; Al-Aqad, 2013).

➢   He is <u>a man tall</u>.   (Arabic: *hua rajulun taweelun*)
➢   They are <u>soldiers brave.</u>   (Arabic: *hum junuudun shuja'aan*).

> These are <u>girls beautifuls</u>   (
Arabic: *hunna fataiaatun jamilaatun*)

Some Arab learners of English might use adjectives plus nouns to express adverbs (Marpaung, 2014; Al-Aqad, 2013). This is attributed to the Arabic use of adverbs as they can be formed in two ways. For instance, the word "quickly" can be translated into Arabic in two ways: "Bisur'a" or ' bishaklen saree3).The following are some examples of such errors.

> Incorrect   :   The temperature rose a sharp rise.
> Correct :   The temperature rose <u>sharply</u>.
> Incorrect   :   He drove with so <u>fast speed.</u>
> Correct :   He drove so fast.
> Incorrect   :   The singer performed <u>a wonderful performance</u>.
> Correct :   The singer performed wonderfully.
> Incorrect   :   Prices have increased <u>a gradual increase</u>.
> Correct :   Prices have increased gradually.

In the above examples, the Arab students" versions represented in the „incorrect" versions are related to the Arabic grammatical rule about unrestricted or absolute object.

2(vi). Errors in Using Some English Modal Verbs
1.   Deletion of the Copula (verb to be) or substituting it with "verb to do": As there is no "verb to be" in Arabic, Arab learners of English tend to delete them when forming their English sentences. Hence, we can find such sentences in their writings:

> Incorrect   :   <u>Huda happy.</u>
> Correct :   Huda is happy.
> Incorrect   :   While <u>my mother cooking</u>, <u>I preparing</u> the table.
> Correct :   While my mother was cooking, I was preparing the table.
> Incorrect   :   <u>Does</u> he your teacher?
> Correct :   Is he your teacher?

All *Incorrect* versions above are students" versions.

2.   Omitting the third person singular morpheme -s (Muftah1 and Rafik-Galea, 2013). Here are few examples of students" versions and their CORRECT forms:

> Incorrect   :   My mother <u>work</u> in a school.
> Correct: My mother works in a school.
> Incorrect   :   My friend <u>speak</u> English.
> Correct :   My friend speaks English

3.   Omitting the auxiliary "verb to do". Here is an example.

> Incorrect   :   My father <u>not drive</u> a bus.

> Correct :   My father does not drive a bus.

4.   Replacing only the auxiliary form of "verb to do" with „verb to be".

> Incorrect   :   **Is** Bob **wears** a suit today*?*
> Correct *:*   Does Bob wear a suit?

2(vii). Word Order
Arab ESL learners make errors in word order when forming English sentences. The following are some examples which are traced in the literature review earlier in this article. Some of the errors the researcher of the current study noticed in her students' writing.

1.   Unlike the English sentence word order, the V-S-O in classical Arabic is the basic word order where the subject is preceded by the verb:

> Incorrect   :   <u>Hoped the committee</u> to solve the problem.
> Correct :   The committee hoped to solve the problem.

However, in colloquial Arabic, the word order of the sentence is S-V-O

2.   Arabic uses the secondary clause which acts as an object and starts with „that" where English uses the infinitive:

> Incoorrect   :   I <u>want that you</u> stay. (Following the Arabic structure).
> Correct :   I want you to stay.

3.   There are no auxiliary verbs in Arabic. So Arabic-speaking learners of English might not use
"verb to do" to form a question. Here is a student's version and its equivalent *Correct*form:

> Incorrect   :   <u>Where Huda spend</u> her summer vacation?
> Correct :   Where does Huda spend her summer vacation?

4.   In Arabic, personal pronouns are often incorporated in the verbs, i.e. certain morphemes are used to indicate what the pronoun is. This makes Arab students learning English use two subjects. Here is an example.

> Incorrect   :   <u>Her father he</u> lives in California.
> Correct :   Her father lives in California.

4.   In English, adjectives precede nouns, whereas they follow nouns in Arabic, as in the following example.

> > Inorrect   :   <u>classroom large</u>. (Following the Arabic structure)
> > Correct :   a large classroom. (Proper English structure)

2(viii) Tenses

There are clear differences between Arabic and English, leading to several mistakes which are made by Arab learners of English. In Arabic, there are only two tenses: the perfect (only the past) and the imperfect (the non-past, simple present and simple future), whereas English has many tenses by conjoining these two tenses with aspects (perfective and progressive). (Ali, 2007; Aoun, Benmamoun, and Chueiri, 2010). Arab learners of English cannot produce progressive and perfect tenses so easily. They use simple present instead. So, we might find such errors in their writing:

➢ Incorrect : I eat my sandwich now.
➢ Correct : I am eating my sandwichnow.

Another example is this.

➢ Incorrect : I didn't see you since last Christmas.
➢ Correct : I haven''t seen you since last Christmas.

2(ix) Relative Clauses

Unlike English relative pronouns, Arabic relative nouns (Asmaa Mawsuula) vary according to the nouns they describe. There are relative nouns for masculine, feminine, singular, dual, and plural. They also vary according to their position in the sentence: subject, object, and predicate. Following is a list of these relative nouns.

Allathi (singular masculine), *Allathan* (masculine dual subject), *Alathein* (masculine pluralobject), *Allati* (feminine singular), *Allatein* (object dual feminine), *Allataan* (dual feminine subject), *Allawati* (plural feminine)

There are several errors which are made by Arabic-speaking learners of English when forming English relative clauses (Ali, 2007:7-8; Hamadalla and Tushyeh, 1998).

1.   Insertion (or not omitting) of the connected pronoun because in Arabic this pronoun is not omitted.

➢ Incorrect: That''s the teacher whom I met him.
➢ Correct :   That''s the teacher whom I met.

Arabic*: thalika huwa almu''alimalathi qabaltuhu.* The detached pronoun ''hu' at the end of the word ''qabaltuhu'' is the resumptive pronoun that should be deleted when ~~forming an~~ English relative clause. The following are other examples of such errors.

➢ Incorrect: The girl who she came helped me in doing my homework.
➢ Correct: The girl who came helped me in doing my homework.

➢ Incorrect : The driver whom the police gave him a ticket was driving too fast.
➢ Correct : The driver whom the police gave a ticket was driving toofast.

➢ Incorrect : The man that I gave a gift to him is my cousin.
➢ Correct : The man that I gave a gift to is my cousin.
➢ Incorrect : I lost the key which I opened the door with it.
➢ Correct : I lost the key which I opened the door with.
➢ Incorrect : The lady whom her purse was stolen reported to thepolice.
➢ Correct : The lady whose purse was stolen reported to the police.

In all the above sentences, the underlined pronouns should be omitted in the CORRECT English versions.

2.   Arabic-speaking learners of English make mistakes in subject-verb agreement in subordinate or secondary clauses:

➢ Incorrect: The teachers who is lecturing this morning is clever.
➢ Correct : The teachers who are lecturing this morning are clever.
3.   They omit "who" which means „allathi or allati'' because it can be omitted in some

Arabic sentences.

➢ Inorrect : Ahmad is a student in our class got the highest average. (English version as some Arabic-speaking learners of English may write it.)
➢ Correct : Ahmad, a student in our class, got the highest average. (The Arabic version of the sentence.)
➢ Correct : Ahmad, who is a student in our class, got the highest average.
➢ Incorrect : Saladin, was the Muslim leader, led the Battle of Hitten.
➢ Correct : Saladin, the Muslim leader, led the Battle of Hitten.
➢ Correct : Saladin was the Muslim leader who led the Battle ofHitten.

4.   In Arabic, relative pronouns are used with nonhuman distinction; and the connected pronoun acting as the object is retained in a restrictive adverbial clause. Thus, Arabic-speaking learners of English might make the following error:

➢Incorrect : Here is the student which you met her last week.
➢Correct : Here is the student who you met last week.

In Arabic, the relative pronouns „*allathi* or allati'' are used with human and non-human nouns.

2(x). Lexical Errors

Abi Samara (2003) listed some examples of lexical errors made by Lebanese students in their writing. Due to literal translation from Arabic, students might use "stay on" instead of "continue" or "keep on"; they might use inappropriate equivalent. The following are some examples of lexical errors.

- ➢ Incorrect : He has a <u>right</u> health. (Arabic: *huwa bisehaten jayedaten.*)
- ➢ Correct : He is healthy.
- ➢ Incorrect : He has a <u>strong</u> disease. Arabic: *huwa yamtaleku maradhan shadeedan.*
- ➢ Correct : She has a severe illness.
- ➢ Incorrect : I am <u>afraid from</u> high sounds. (Arabic: „anna „akhafu minalaswaat al‟aaliya.)
- ➢ Correct : I am afraid of high sounds.
- ➢ Incorrect : For me, to be <u>counted</u> as a good mother is important. (Arabic: binnesbati li, minaal muhem „an o‟utabara ummun.
- ➢ Correct : For me, it is important to be considered as a mother.

2(xi). Lexico-Semantic Usage

In English, some words have distinctive meanings which count for only one equivalent in Arabic, such as (special and private) . For that reason, Arabic -speaking learners of English are more likely to say:

- ➢ My brother went to a <u>special</u> hospital.
- ➢ This is a very <u>private</u> occasion.

Besides, in that location is the sentence „He cut the street‟ which is practiced instead of „He crossed the street‟.

III. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

"To use two languages familiarly and without contaminating one by the other, is very difficult," said Samuel Johnson in 1761." (Cited in Cook, 2002; Abi Samara, 2003).

Making mistakes while reading any new accomplishment is something natural as it is part of using the best of talents and potentials to arrive at a proficiency layer of professionalism. This is exactly the case whenlearning languages. The teachers' wisdom can be practiced in such situations to guide their students in an attempt to make mistakes a source of learning, not a factor of frustration. Following are some recommendations for teachers on how to deal with their students' mistakes. More focus will be given to the situations of ESL in the Arab countries.

1. Returning selective attention: Terrell used the term "Explicit Grammar Instruction" and defined it as "the employment of instructional strategies to draw the students' attention to or focus on contour and/or structure." (Terrell, 1991:53).Form-focused instruction or consciousness raising is a dependable solution for grammatical mistakes."Focused attention may be a practical (though not theoretical) necessity for successful language learning" (Schmidt, 2001 as quoted in Robinson and Ellis, 2008: 389).

2. As most humans' brains are pattern-seekers, it is useful to supply students with rulers and patterns when explaining grammar. Use should precede "usage".

3. Instructors are advised to apply the correct strategies as follows: student's self-discipline, peer correction and finally teacher's correction. Teachers should correct mistakes which are immediately connected to the target of the lesson.

4. Teachers need to determine that students are practicing English as a way of communication in their group work.

5. Most significantly, teachers of English to Arabic-speaking learners have to indicate respect and recognition to their students' native language. For instance, they can ask their pupils how they utilize a rule in Arabic.

6. Style and lexical differences should be conveyed to the students mind in order to avoid getting to such mistakes.

7. The teachers' attitudes towards errors should change. They need to know when and how to correct the students errors. They ought not to frustrate students by correcting every mistake.

Lastly, it is worth quoting a Von Humboldt's speech, "We cannot really teach language, we can only create conditions in which it will grow spontaneously in the psyche in its own way".

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