

Enhancing English Language Learning for Arab Native Speakers through Comparison with Arabic Language Fundamentals

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Abstract

This paper gives a detailed account of teaching English language to Arab native speakers by contrasting between the basic linguistic components that form both Arabic and English. Based on the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis and drawing on the findings of several second language acquisition (SLA) theories (interlanguage theory, sociocultural theory, the generative approach, processability theory), the study investigates the impact of Arabic phonology, morphology, syntax, and pragmatics on learning English. The results show the positive and negative language transfer which have a tremendous impact on learners' performance with focus on the domains where there is substantial structural divergence between the two languages. Using a model of pervasive comparative linguistics and literature-based teaching methodology, this study states that by addressing common learner errors, attending to culturally responsive pedagogy, and the use of bilingual scaffolding, positive gains may be evidenced with high school level ESL learners. Ultimately, curriculum design informed by language comparison that caters to these cross-linguistic contrasts is called for to enhance EFL learning of Arab learners.

Keywords: Arab learners, English language learning, Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, Interlanguage Theory, Sociocultural Theory, cross-linguistic influence, SLA, bilingual education

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1. Introduction

Never before in the history of the world has there been a language as important to global communication, to global commerce, to international travel and international higher education, international science, technology and engineering, and international publishing as is English today. In many Arab countries, English proficiency is becoming not just a valuable skill but a prerequisite for academic and economic success in an era of globalization. Consequently, this has driven Arab governments to include English into their overall education policy as a national language and teach it from the pre-school level to university and make it an institutionalized part of the system. However, and de-spite the long time that people invest in teaching English, students who are native speakers of Arabic encounter to a great extent difficulties to be fluent in English, especially in skills of speaking and writing. The issue represents one aspect of a chronic problem: yawning linguistic divides between Arabic and English. In addition, Arabic is a Semitic root and morphologic language that is read from right to left and has unique phonological structure as compared to the Indo-European language, English. These differences could be observed in the different language learning problems of the Arab students such as mispronunciations, grammatical errors, wrong word choices, and sentence structures. In addition, teaching practices in Arab EFL classes are generally limited,

rote learning and limited to grammar translation, and they do not offer learners genuine and interactive critical engagement with the language. These pedagogical constraints are exacerbated by the lack of culturally and linguistically relevant materials and resources, further limiting students' progress. The current study pursues the search whether a contrastive analysis (CA) in terms of comparing between linguistic systems in L1 (Arabic) and L2 (English) is a more successful task in the teaching of English as Foreign Language (EFL) with Arabian EFL learners. That is, it tries to answer the question as to how structural and phonological differences affect acquisition process, to find out whether explicit comparison can cast light on the rendering of complex ideas of the target language, and to see the value of transferring forms from the learners' own language to help them learn the target language. In a more general vein, it hopes to contribute to the fields of methodology and curriculum design in ESL by offering empirically grounded, tightly focused methods to cater for the particular learning needs of Arab EFL learners.

2. Theoretical Framework

This research examines how English language learning from an Arab linguistically native speaker can be improved or facilitated in the light of contrastive analysis between the grammar of Arabic and the grammar of English. As the solid theoretical foundation underpinning this study, the model integrates several popular theories proposed by previous research in the field of SLA, such as the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, the Interlanguage Hypothesis, the Behaviorist and the Mentalist theory of first language acquisition (FLA), the Sociocultural Theory (ST), the Generative Approach, and Processability Theory. All of these theories provide important views on cognitive, linguistic, and socio-cultural factors that contribute to the learning and transfer of languages. According to the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH), the major concerns of second language learning (L2L) are the structural dissimilarities between learner L1 and L2. As Lado (1957) formulated, "whatever is similar to the native language will be simple, and whatever is different will be difficult." This hypothesis facilitated the development of pedagogic methodology in the mid-20th century that aimed to prevent negative language transfer from occurring by requiring a detailed analysis of the similarities and differences between the L1 and L2. Recent literature underscores the importance of CAH, mainly at the phonological and syntactic levels, for the acquisition of L2 English in Arabic speakers (Zeinab et al., 2023). For example, Arabic's emphatic consonants, lack of the /p/ phoneme, as well as the Verb-Subject-Object (VSO) word order for its sentence structure, have a great impact on Arabs' English pronunciation and sentence construction. Despite criticism of CAH for its predictive accuracy, it is a reliable measure for establishing erroneous transfer of training and guiding subsequent corrective feedback. Proposed by Selinker (1972), Interlanguage Theory brought about the view that learners develop a unique linguistic system based on a synthesis of their L1 and the L2 they have contact with, as well as development patterns that are not present in any of the two. This process continues to be dynamic, for with more exposure, instruction, and internalization of rules evolve. Fossilization – a process of erroneous linguistic forms becoming permanently entrenched despite being exposed to (and aware of) the correct form – is particularly pertinent to the Arab learner as noted by Al-Khresheh (2016). Fossilized forms are attributed to fossilized structures, which grow out of deep-seated L1 interference, ineffective feedback, or insufficient opportunities for communication, and they bring us the necessity of suitable pedagogical tactics. Interlanguage theory highlights the importance of longitudinal follow-up and diagnostic feedback to assist learners in developing their L2 accuracy and fluency. From first language acquisition, three main theories (Behaviorist, Mentalist (Nativist), and Social Interactionist) contribute to the understanding of L2 acquisition. On the model side, we have behaviorist views (e.g., Skinner 1957) which play up imitation and reinforcement in learning, considering language acquisition as a case of stimulus-response

conditioning. On the other hand, the Mentalist view, proposed by Chomsky (1965), advocates an innate Language Acquisition Device (LAD), which implies that individuals are born with a language faculty regulated by Universal Grammar. According to these theories, these two implications are different in the move to SLA. Behaviorist systems emphasize the need for repetition and feedback, while Mentalist theories advocate input that relies on a learner's knowledge of universal grammar. Social Interactionist Theory, propounded by Vygotsky, focuses on the contribution of social interaction and scaffolding, and the significance of communicative practice in authentic domains. Based on Vygotsky, Sociocultural Theory posits that cognitive development is primarily social in nature. For SCT, language learning involves second-language learners' constructive engagement in mediated learning activity with more knowledgeable others, usually within the learner's ZPD. As van Compernelle and Williams (2013) insist, SCT is most crucial about concept-based instruction, dynamic assessment, and dialogic engagement. For Arabic learners of English, SCT serves to direct the pedagogical design of EFL learning contexts that include Arabic cultural and language, and L2 English. Research has indicated that learners thrive when working on joint activities and receiving peer-produced feedback, which corresponds to the collectivist cultural values of many Arab societies (Lantolf & Poehner, 2011). It highlights the degree to which UG is available to L2 learners. This model, referred to as the Interface Hypothesis (Rothman and Slabakova, 2018), focuses on the impact of experienced grammar and the constraints of L1 transfer. This view has serious ramifications for Arab learners, as it tells us why the acquisition of some syntactic features of English, e.g., subject-auxiliary inversion in questions, or the use of articles, continues to be problematic despite instruction. These problems could be due to UG-restricted transfer conditions or the lack of corresponding structures in Arabic. Pienemann (1998)'s Pienemann's (1998) Processability Theory is a psycholinguistic model to explain the sequence in which L2 structures are acquired. It asserts that a learner can only learn the language that they are developmentally ready to cope with. In the case of Arab learners, PT claims that the order of acquiring English morphological and syntactic structures is a result of a processing constraint rather than of instructed order. This understanding has implications for course design through the call for the developmentally appropriate grammar teaching. These theories as a whole provide a solid base upon which to build an understanding and development of English learning among Arab first and native language users. By re-conceptualizing contrastive linguistics, cognitive development, social interaction, and language processing, this project will frame pedagogical intervention that is sensitive to culture, appropriate in cognition, and informed by language.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study conducted a comprehensive narrative review to summarize existing material on helping Arab mother tongue learners communicate in English by referencing Arabic language fundamentals. By critically analyzing theories, practical results, and pedagogies, the review aims to identify patterns, challenges, and potentially effective teaching methods. Unlike the strict inclusion and exclusion protocols of typical systematic reviews, it allows for richer and more contextualized understandings of how Arabic linguistic structures influence second language acquisition processes.

Data Sources and Search Strategy

To provide a solid basis for the review, this content sourced literature from Google Scholar, ERIC, JSTOR, Scopus, ResearchGate, and a top priority database. Searches steered toward examples "Arab students learning English," "contrastive linguistics: Arabic and English," or "interlanguage theory: Arabic students." As for keywords, there are terms incorrectly compiled from existing knowledge of second language acquisition; an example would be "Theories of SLA among Arab-speaking EFL learners". Most of the

studies were published after 2011, although some of these classic works were read in order to provide a backdrop for our theoretical framework.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The review analyzed peer-reviewed journal articles on Arabic language fundamentals, conference proceedings discussing how children acquire English in Arabic-speaking societies, doctoral theses exploring the relationship between Arabic and English reading skills, and authoritative book chapters on these topics. Only sources in English were included to maintain consistent analysis depth. Studies focusing solely on non-Arabic L1 learners of English or lacking discussion of theoretical foundations were excluded

Data Extraction and Analysis

Data Collection and Analysis in This paper starts essentially working on text data as well as logic. Themes were Polygonal-LAD chunks, SLOB transformation rules, Macro syntax Categories. It was at this point that we came to systematize our themes. Through a constant comparison approach, insight strands within the major SLA theories as well as their relevance to Arab learners were grouped. For this study, we comparatively analyzed texts.

3.2. Quality evaluation

The credibility of each included study was judged on the basis of its publication, how frequently it was cited, and methodological rigor, plus relevance to research questions. Preference was given to those publications evaluated and published by peers and with high impact factors, which could not only represent themselves theoretically but also be put into practice at educational institutions.

3.3. Ethical issues

Since the current study doesn't involve any human subjects or collected personal data, formal ethical approval was unnecessary. Yet works mentioned were both properly cited and used by standards of academic integrity

4. Comparative Linguistic Analysis

A contrastive analysis between Arabic and English shows that there are many distinctions that present both difficulties and possibilities to the Arab L2 learners of English. These distinctions hold in the phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic-pragmatic domains, contributing in turn to the learning path of learners and the errors committed by them. Knowledge of these differences is important for the design of LSP methods that are language-sensitive and learner-responsive.

5. Phonological Differences:

Arabic and English have different sets of phonological inventories, which result in predictable patterns of mispronunciation in Arab learners. One of the key points of difference is that certain English phonemes don't exist in Arabic; /p/, /v/, and /ŋ/ (as in "sing"), those are usually substituted with their closest Arabic counterparts. For example, the /p/ sound in the English word "pen" can be produced as /b/ [b] similarly to "ben", by Arabic speakers due to the absence of the /p/ sound in Arabic (Abu-Rabia & Kehat, 2004). English also produces stress and intonation patterns that are largely different from native ones of native Arabic speakers, contributing to flat intonation or incorrect stress placement, which eventually influences intelligibility and fluency (Zeinab et al., 2023). Furthermore, the note on Arabic is that it has pharyngealized or emphatic sounds, which is not available in English and can lead to accent interference and listener confusion (Taha, 2013).

6. Morphological Contrasts:

Arabic is morphologically based on a root-and-pattern system, whereby words are formed by plugging roots into predefined vocalic patterns to create meaning and grammatical function. English, in contrast, is a concatenative language, using linear morphology and affixation. This basic contrast complicates the learning of English verb tenses, plurals and affixes for word building. Arabic learners also find difficulty in using of the *al-* and *a* when using the definite and indefinite articles, as Arabic just uses the definite article (*al-*) but doesn't use a close equivalent for the indefinite article, which leads to overgeneralization or omission in writing and speaking (Al-Khresheh, 2016). Also, due to the different paradigms and formations of verbs in both languages, SV agreement and auxiliary verb structures remain problematic (Mahmoud, 2000).

7. Syntactic Structures:

Compared to English, Arabic word order, question generation, and negation are syntactically different. Arabic, like other SOV languages use a VSO order, unlike English which is an SVO language. Such departure results in differences between learners' first language (L1) and the target language and many syntactic transfer errors when learners produce English sentences in Arabic word order, e.g., "Goes Ahmed to school" instead of "Ahmed goes to school. In addition, the inversion of auxiliaries in questions in English (e.g., "Does he go?" is not reflected in Arabic, so learners create non-inverted structures such as "He goes?" (Selinker (1972); Al-Azzawi (2014)). Negation also operates differently: in Arabic, the negation particle can appear after verbs (e.g., "La yadhab") but in English, negation must be realized through auxiliaries (Mahboob, 2014).

8. Semantic and Pragmatic Influence:

Linguistically, a one-to-one corpus-based translation of Arabic into English tends to fail in collocation, idiomatic, and word choice. For instance, Literal translation of, "open the television" for "turn on the television" represents semantic transfer and not communication equivalence (Mahmoud, 2000). Pragmatically, there are differences in politeness between Arabic, which uses more complex forms of address and expressions of politeness and respect, and English, which prefers the use of more concise, circumspect otherwise polite forms of address. These disparities can cause pragma linguistic failure, when the meaning of an intended utterance is misunderstood because of cultural mismatches in speech acts (Lantolf & Poehner, 2011; Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006). Students sometimes sound too formal or inadvertently impolite in English, a result of pragmatic transfer from their own linguistic conventions in Arabic.

9. Literature Review:

Tepich et al. (2024) explore the use of Arabic at the classroom level in English language teaching. They report that while the strategic use of Arabic helps comprehension and lowers learner anxiety, over-reliance can interfere with the principles of immersion and learner empowerment. The authors call for context-sensitive principles for L1 use in EFL classrooms. This is highly relevant to the current study which is concerned with how Arabic can be an enabler and inhibitor in the learning of English, compatible with the comparative nature of this review.

Garra-Alloush et al. (2023) conduct extensive research on spoken English errors produced by Arab-Israeli EFL learners, and they identify more than 1000 cases of errors (grammatical, lexical, and phonological). Their findings corroborate L1 interference as prominent influence especially in pronunciation (e.g., /p/ replaced with /b/) and syntax (e.g., ungrammatical verb tenses). They foreground the additional challenge of triglossia, as well as moving back and forth between colloquial Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic and Hebrew, with the potential to interfere with the learning of English in a sustained way. The significance of the present study was that it evaluates the way the Arabic linguistic system impacts on English learners' output, thus confirming the comparative nature of this review.

El-Hawat et al. (2023) frame the function(s) of English in Libyan society in relation to identity and soft power. They claim that the price of Educational Advancement is nothing less than their cultural heritage, a recent cultural symbol evolved by the dynamics of the World around them. According to their findings language policy and educational reform ought to be reflective of these more general sociopolitical considerations. This view is consistent with the current study in the way that the national identity and sociopolitical context connect with the process of learning English language in the Arabic-speaking countries.

Mansour et al. (2022) investigate the use of Arabic into the EFL Libyan tertiary classroom. Their study indicates that when it is used with caution and with suitable guidance, Arabic language can play an instructional bridging role, particularly in clarifying abstract grammar or new concepts, without undermining the communicative focus of the English lesson. This finding is important, in view of its contribution to the comparative dimension of the study, since it accounts for the fact that Arabic, when used selectively, can provide an effective channel of support for English learners.

Al-Hadrami et al. (2020) investigate the relative impact of native and non-native English teachers on students' speaking prowess. The research results of the study suggest that native speakers can normally provide more appropriate authentic pronunciation and intonation models while nonnative teachers may be better at providing the clear grammatical explanation and sharing a socio-cultural background increasing the sense of rapport, competence... with learners. This is important to the present study as it emphasize the pedagogical aspect of teaching style (and linguistic background (related to Arabic language familiarity)) in influencing student spoken English performance.

Al-Zayed et al. (2019) explore teacher beliefs concerning mother tongue (L1) incorporation in Jordanian EFL environments. Most teachers say that Arabic is helpful in explicating complex grammar and vocabulary but there are concerns about limiting learner exposure to English. Their results imply a variation in the attitudes according to school and teacher sex, reflecting the influence of the school culture. This novelty adds value to the present study by demonstrating the pragmatic use of Arabic in the teaching of English, and its impact on students' achievement.

Rothman and Slabakova (2018) A state-of-field review of generative principles Second language acquisition: The multilingual turn Rothman, van Heuven, & Treffers-Daller's (2018) latest discussion of a generative approach to SLA (especially focusing on the role of Universal Grammar (UG) and how UG constrains the process of L2 acquisition). They maintain that input and L1 transfer are influential, but that UG imposes innate constraints which influence interlanguage grammars. For Arabic L2 learners of English, this means that, in spite of the fact that there is structural non-congruence (such as verb-subject-object order in Arabic vs. SVO order in English), L2 speakers will still be able to have their L2 competence filtered through universal grammar. This study thus also aligns with the stated goal of the present review to search for potential underlying linguistic universals that could enable cross-linguistic learning (Rothman & Slabakova, 2018).

Rahim et al. (2017) investigate leading students to think and learn in Arabic as a medium in the EFL classroom in terms of cognitive and pedagogical aspects. They claim that L1 support helps with the initial understanding, especially at lower proficiency levels, but the shift should be toward English-only instruction. They advocate for intentional use of code-switching. This is relevant for present study since it gives pedagogical perspective that in early beginners of English language learning, the use of Arabic language might develop effective for mediating comprehension gaps.

Alzahrani et al. (2016) explored communicative difficulties experienced by Arab learners because of the culturally different 'rules' in the Arabic and English-speaking societies. Their study indicates that the intonation patterns and conversational turn-taking between the two groups of language are quite different and this may cause misunderstanding. The authors contend that taking account of these pragmatic variations in the classroom has the potential to improve learners' intercultural competence and spoken fluency. Such research is definitely connected with the present work since it focuses on the extent to which Arabic communicative norms affect foreign speaking ability of the Arab learners.

Altaieb et al. (2015) explore obstacles faced by Libyan secondary teachers in the execution of an English curriculum. Their research uncovers a disconnect between curricular visions and classroom practice driven by limited teacher preparation, limited resources, and resistance to pedagogical change. They propose more site-based curriculum development and more teacher control. The application of this to the present is how course design derived from an Arabic background in education affects the acquisition of English.

Tajareh (2015) provides a foundational examination of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH), emphasizing its pedagogical value when comparing linguistic systems like Arabic and English. The study notes that interference from the native language can lead to both negative and positive transfer, and that teachers can utilize contrastive insights to anticipate student difficulties in areas like phonology and syntax. This aligns with the current review's comparative approach, as understanding contrastive structures between Arabic and English can enhance curriculum design and learner support strategies.

Menezes (2013) suggests that we should consider second language acquisition in terms of complex adaptive systems rather than as a linear or monolithic one. She redescribes theories of Behaviorism, Universal Grammar, and Socio-cultural Action Theories to illustrate that SLA is a complex process of interaction between internal cognitive processes and the external social world. This universalist perspective resonates with what many Arabic/English L2 learners have been reported as experiencing; namely unique shock transitions between script, sounds, and syntax. The support of the study for an integrated theorization corresponds with the purpose of the present review to integrate contrastive linguistic and sociocultural perspectives in an effort to best meet the needs of Arab EFL learners.

10. Discussion

The results of this study highlight the process of interaction between Arabic-English linguistic systems and will certainly contribute to a better understanding of the role played by the first language (L1) structural units in the process of L2 acquisition. Through the contrastive analysis hypothesis, this study has demonstrated the areas of phonology, morphology, syntax, and pragmatics where interference is most evident for Arab students of English. This interference, particularly that due to structural differences such as VSO vs. SVO word order, root-pattern morphology vs. linear morphology, or the lack of particular phonemes in Arabic, frequently surfaces as persistent errors that are resistant to traditional instruction. These patterns support previous findings in the literature (e.g., Al-Khresheh, 2016; Zeinab et al., 2023) and corroborate the utility of contrastive analysis for diagnosing and treating learner errors.

The synthesis of several theories of SLA into the theoretical framework – Including Interlanguage Theory, Sociocultural Theory (SCT), the Generative Approach and Processability Theory – permitted such a multi-

faceted view of this matter. For example, fossilization observed in Arab learners can be understood from Interlanguage Theory as indicative of a stagnation point in language development that calls for intervention in the form of pedagogical procedures that extend beyond traditional grammar presentation. Similarly, SCT has implications for identifying the role of sociocultural context within Arabic-speaking societies which could potentially enhance or impede the learning of English, depending on the organization of language instruction. The emphasis of SCT on the importance of dialogic learning and engaging with peers fits well with the evidence that shows that learners are most effective when they engage in interactive, socially mediated language use.

From a pedagogical perspective, the study also notably suggests that when Arabizi use does not substitute for, but rather complements L2 activity, it has the potential to promote metalinguistic knowledge, facilitate comprehension, reduce frustration and thus encourage coexistence of complementary codes, particularly at lower levels. Studies such as Tepich et al. (2024) and Mansour et al. (2022) supports this perception as they emphasize the usefulness of L1 as a scaffolding device rather than a crutch. Meanwhile, the empirical studies conducted reveal that the learner's profit from culturally sensitive teaching techniques, authentic materials and task design that offers learners dynamic adaptations on both linguistic systems.

11. Conclusion

The current study provided a cornerstone to scrutinize the effect of some Arabic linguistic basics (Lbs) on the English learning process for Arab native speakers. Utilizing the methodology of contrastive analysis, and amalgamating a considerable amount of SLA theory, Interlanguage Theory, Sociocultural Theory, the Generative Approach and Processability Theory, the study also offers insight into the linguistic, cognitive, and socio-cultural factors that mediate the attainment of target-like results. The cross-linguistic comparison of Arabic and English explains the predictable learning difficulties which arise due to the phonological, morphological, syntactic, and pragmatic differences, namely through negative language transfer.

The results demonstrate the necessity of acknowledging these cross-linguistic differences in the design of pedagogical intervention. Teachers who are aware of such language differences can predict some typical learner errors, plan focused instruction, and use L1 strategically. Rather than a hindrance Viewed through the active role of AMC, Arabic is established as a base that may facilitate English language development, if used deliberately and in a pedagogical manner.

In the end, the study recommends instructional methods that are theoretically sound as well as contextually sensitive calling for both culturally responsive teaching and curriculum that honor the linguistic realities of Arab students. This is grounded within a broader framework of English language learning, and the paper concludes by providing teaching recommendations and practical implications designed to enhance the education of Arab EFL students.

12. Recommendations

1. **Incorporate Contrastive Analysis into Curriculum Design:** Curriculum developers should systematically include modules that address the most salient differences between Arabic and English, especially in phonology, morphology, and syntax. Tailoring content to these known linguistic contrasts will help minimize negative transfer.
2. **Promote Bilingual Scaffolding in Early Learning Stages:** English instructors should be trained to strategically use Arabic as a scaffolding tool during early instruction phases to enhance understanding and learner confidence. However, a gradual reduction in L1 use should follow as learners progress.

3. **Integrate Sociocultural Learning Strategies:** Teaching methods should promote peer collaboration, task-based learning, and interactive group work that align with the collectivist orientation common in Arab cultures, consistent with Sociocultural Theory.
4. **Develop Teacher Training Programs on SLA Theories:** Instructors should be well-versed in Interlanguage Theory, Processability Theory, and other SLA frameworks to better diagnose errors and adapt their instructional techniques accordingly.
5. **Design Assessment Tools Sensitive to L1 Influence:** Language proficiency assessments should account for expected errors arising from L1 interference and should differentiate between developmental and fossilized errors.
6. **Use Authentic, Culturally Relevant Materials:** Incorporating culturally familiar contexts and topics into English reading, listening, and writing exercises can increase learner engagement and facilitate smoother linguistic transition.

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