

The effects of Arabic on English writing of Petra University students

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Abstract

In this talk, I will investigate the interference effects of Arabic (L1) on the English (L2) writing of Jordanian students. This talk is based on a sample of 40 essays of a given topic and the results of a placement test consisting of 100 multiple choice items. The errors will be classified, categorized and tabulated according to the levels of grammar. Based on a descriptive research, this talk will elaborate on the controversial issue of L1 interference. A contrastive analysis of the writing of Jordanian L2 writing is done to investigate whether L1 is the only source of grammatical errors or not.

Among different skills of L2, writing is considered to be the most difficult skill to master. This difficulty, according to Richards and Renandya (2002:303), lies not only in generating and organizing of ideas, but also in translating these ideas into readable discourse ".As writing is a productive skill, the instructor has to exploit all means, and methods that can serve to produce better writers. A number of studies (Jonopolous, 1992; Santos, 1988) assert that a lack of grammatical accuracy in writing may impede progress. In this talk, I will gather the errors according to the levels of grammar: Word order, morphology of words, classes, phrases and clauses. The Question is whether errors occur because of divergences between L1 and L2 or because of their convergences. Thus the notion of transfer is very controversial, having different meanings to different people. According to Widdowson (1990), although transfer is no longer viewed as the only cause of error at the structural level, L1 is still a complex, and significant systematic

resource for the achievements and synthesis of meaning. In addition, CA (Fox1994); Spack, 1997) which have focused on characteristics of L1 languages and culture have helped us predict rhetorical errors in writing. It is worth noting that cultural interference can be an obstacle to comprehension.