

THE SOCIAL INFLUENCE OF MODERN STANDARD ARABIC ON THE USE OF ENGLISH VERBS IN THE ESSAYS OF LEBANESE HIGH SCHOOL EFL LEARNERS

Liza Der Khachadourian

Dr., Rafik Hariri University, Lebanon, khachadourianlj@rhu.edu.lb

Abstract

An intricate area in EFL for many Lebanese Arabic speaking learners I've met is the proper use of English verbs. Their essays usually reflect a systematic use of verbless sentences, erroneous tenses, and transliterated expressions that might alter the whole concept of the intended communication. The aim of this study is to map the erroneous use of English verbs in essays written by Lebanese third secondary EFL learners, to analyze the source of these errors, to correlate it to the social influence, the transfer from their native language, Modern Standard Arabic, and to contribute to EFL research in the Lebanese context. To analyze errors of the corpus data quantitatively and qualitatively, Error Analysis, an important technique in the field of second language acquisition based on Ellis & Barkhuizen's (2009) approach was performed. Then errors such as: temporal and modal verb operators, auxiliaries, the infinitive form of verbs, passive voice operator, conditional forms, were identified, counted, reconstructed, their linguistic taxonomy and surface structure taxonomy was defined. Finally, to determine the source of these errors, verbs in English Functional Grammar (EFG) (Halliday, 2004) and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) (Ryding, 2010) were analyzed contrastively. The findings revealed that the verbal category formed 35% of all their Interlingual errors. If attention is not turned to the notion of Interlanguage now, our learners will get stuck into fossilization, fail to overcome their weakness; later on, they will be carrying it with them to the university level. Suggestions for how to reconsider modern teaching methodology were addressed to specialized authorities, curriculum designers and EFL teachers.

Keywords: social Influence, Interlanguage, error analysis, the verbal class of EFG, verbal class of MSA.

1. INTRODUCTION

Studies in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) have never ceased to investigate different kinds of errors, Arabic speaking learners commit up to this date. Diab (1996) studied the English writings of the Lebanese students and found a number of errors on the semantic and syntactic levels, which reflected a transfer of Arabic structures and literal translations (pp.79-80). Abu-Jarad (2008) analyzed verb phrases in Palestinian University students and indicated the shift of tense as a result of using English tense morphology similar to that of Arabic. He discussed the studies of Radwan (1988), Syrian University, and Dessouky (1990), Al-Azhar University, who found that the weight of errors was on spelling, verb tense and prepositions. Similarly, Abu-Jarad quoted Farhat (1994), whose Sudanese students generated numerous articles, tense,

concord, pronoun, copula omission, adverb positioning and adjective positioning errors (Abu-Jarad, 2008, pp. 54-57). In the same vein, Shammas (2010) studied major problems encountered by MA students of translation in Jordan and Syria. He focused on their linguistic errors and cultural effect on translating Arabic terms into English, which were classified as linguistic deviations and cultural discrepancies. Moreover, Mahmoud (2011) studied errors of learners at Sultan Qaboos University Oman; who realized that they committed translation errors, code mixing, transliteration, foreignization, over-generalization and word coinage (pp. 28-49). Recently, Hamdi (2017) analyzed the grammatical errors of Tunisian EFL learners and observed that the largest category of errors was verb tenses, which comprised 33,33% of the total errors.

As seen here, Arabic speaking learners of English as a first foreign language (EFL) in general reflect linguistic errors in their writings. This study highlighted the erroneous use of English verbs (e.g. temporal and modal verb operators, auxiliaries, the infinitive form of verbs, passive voice operator, conditional forms) in essays written by Lebanese third secondary EFL learners and correlated it to the social influence, the transfer from their native language Arabic, employing Error Analysis based on Ellis & Barkhuizen's (2009) technique. To determine the source of these errors, verbs in English Functional Grammar (EFG) (Halliday, 2004) and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) (Ryding, 2010) were analyzed contrastively.

A systematic EA study of the verbal class in Lebanon to my knowledge is rare; not much attention has been given to this area so far. So the purpose of this study was: to map the erroneous use of English verbs in essays written by Lebanese third secondary EFL learners, to analyze the source of these errors, to correlate it to the social influence, the transfer from their native language, Modern Standard Arabic, and to contribute to EFL research in the Lebanese context.

1.1 Theoretical Background

1.1.1 Social Influences on Language Learning

Language learning takes place in a social context that consists of a number of influential social factors. These factors include the setting and the participants, which establish the conditions for language learning. But learning an additional language to Barkhuizen (2004) is a cognitive and a complicated process, whereas mastering and utilizing the grammatical system of that language is even more complex (c.f. Davies, 2004, p. 552). To Halliday (2004), language is used to make sense of our experience, and to carry out our interactions with other people. This means that grammar has to interface with what goes on outside language, with the happenings and conditions of the world, and with the social processes we engage in. But at the same time, it has to organize the construal of experience, and the enactment of social processes, so that they can be transformed into wording. The way it does this is by splitting the task into two. First, experience and interpersonal relationships are transformed into meaning, the stratum of semantics. Second, the meaning is further transformed into wording, the stratum of lexicogrammar. Halliday (2004) drew that learning the set of words that compose a phrase is not enough; one should know the meaning, the grammatical and the lexical properties of those words (pp. 24-26). In this context, quoting Larsen-Freeman (1991), grammar teaching is crucial to build on linguistic forms of the target language (TL) accurately (p. 280). However, the role of applied linguists in the field of SLA is to investigate how learners use this TL in production, to collect samples of learners' language, and to analyze and describe how learners construct linguistic systems (i.e. Interlanguage) at different stages of development (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2009, p. 15). In this paper, out of several social influences, only native language interference is discussed.

1.1.2 Interlanguage

Interlanguage (IL) theory, introduced by Selinker (1972), describes how L2 learners produce utterances in the TL that are not identical to that of a native speaker, so they reflect "a separate linguistic system", a variation of the TL norm (p. 35). The importance of IL to Takač (2008) lies in the fact that it made the first attempt to describe SLA process from a linguistic and a cognitive perspective (p. 31). Takač considered that language learning strategies are central to IL. Learners adopt various strategies to make sense of language input and to control the output. For example, grammar learning strategies help learners to acquire a mental grammar of the TL, a definite systematicity in IL (p.32). But the main concern within the process of IL is that it fossilizes, specially when language transfer and transfer of L1 rules occur (Tarone, 2006, p.747; Wei, 2008, p.128). Later, the learners fail to achieve a full native speaker grammar (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2009, p. 55), and end up with ingrained errors, which might be carried it with them to the university level.

1.1.3. Error Analysis

Error Analysis (EA), originated by Corder (1974), deals with the investigation of the language produced by second language (L2) learners, which could be a special sort of dialect equipped with a set of rules and grammar (c.f. Richards, p. 158). Decades later, Ellis & Barkhuizen (2009) set detailed procedures to conduct

a successful EA, the steps of which are: (1) to identify errors, and reconstruct the sample as this would have been produced by the learner's native speaker counterpart; (2) to find the **linguistic taxonomy**, following James (1998), usually based on categories drawn from a descriptive grammar of the target language (e.g. the past simple tense, aspect as perfective and progressive, the subjunctive, auxiliary verbs as primary and modal and non-finite verbs); (3) to find the **surface structure taxonomy**, following Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982), based on 'the ways surface structures are altered' in erroneous utterances such as: omission (e.g., omission of copula *be* in the utterance *My sisters very pretty*), addition (overgeneralization of rules: *eat, ate*), misinformation (e.g. *Do they be happy?* Use of *me* as both a subject and object pronoun, instead of *Don't + V* the use of *no +V*); (4) to explain and determine the source of errors (e.g. the interlingual and intralingual) in order to account for why they were made. From the point of view of SLA research, this is the most important stage in an EA to distinguish errors and mistakes. The former happen because of gaps in the learner's L2 knowledge; the latter occur because of difficulty of processing, forms, that are not fully mastered (c.f. Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2009, pp. 60-62). Similarly, Tarone (2006) found EA crucial in making the focus move from just teaching materials and theories about L2 learning problems, to the systematic and scientific observation of learner language (p. 747).

2. METHODOLOGY

To find the effect of social influence of Arabic on the erroneous use of English verbs in the essays of Lebanese third secondary EFL classes, and given that language learning is a cognitive process, the verbal classes of EFG and MSA were analyzed contrastively. Then the transfer of MSA linguistic knowledge was revealed. Analysis was conducted based on a valid linguistic theory, EA and the violation in the corpus data of the participants was tracked. The erroneous use of verbs *to be, have, do, modals and tenses* was studied and the percentage of interlingual errors per word count was calculated on excel and illustrated using tables and a pie chart.

2.1 Participants

A total of 70 Lebanese male and female third secondary EFL learners served as participants for studying said IL errors. Their age ranged from 17 to 20 years old. The Lebanese decree no. 5697 published on June 15, 2001 concerning the official examination regulation in chapter 1, candidacy conditions, article 2, paragraph 3, states that each candidate for the Lebanese Secondary Cycle Certificate Official Exams, should be over 17 years old.

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The collected data of this study were written samples produced by EFL Lebanese learners, their essays written at the Lebanese Secondary Cycle Certificate Official Exams, consisted of 80-500 words. Ethically speaking, knowing that the mentioned exam papers are the property of the Lebanese Ministry of Education & Higher Education (MEHE), a letter was sent to the head of the MEHE in Lebanon, asking his permission to initiate the study, which was approved in 3 days, with great enthusiasm. For successful survey samples, as Cohen and Manion (c.f. Nunan, 2008, p. 142) advised researchers need to employ simple random strategy, to select subjects at random from a list of population, but systematically, for example choose every 20th person. So, the official exam papers of this study, were randomly and systematically selected, from variety of packs related to the 6 different provinces of Lebanon: North, Nabatieh, South, Beirut, Jabal Lubnan and Al Bikaa. 70 exam papers were photocopied from all 4 sections: Literature & Humanities, Sociology & Economics, Life Sciences and General Sciences. When the papers were handed in for this study, the privacy of the candidates was respected; their names, their grades, the correction were not revealed. So this study was affected by none of the mentioned variables.

The methods used in the analysis of the findings were quantitative and qualitative, based on an important technique in the field of SLA, EA. It was employed to study the verbal errors occurring in the essays of said Lebanese learners (n=70) written at the Lebanese Secondary Cycle Certificate Official Exams, selected randomly from all Lebanese provinces. Based on Ellis and Barkhuizen's (2009) basic steps of EA, erroneous expressions (temporal and modal verb operators, auxiliaries, the infinitive form of verbs, passive voice operator, conditional forms, *be, have, do, modals and tenses* in EFG) were collected from the learners' samples, then tabulated in accordance with the errors, where errors were reconstructed based the English Functional Grammar (EFG) (Halliday, 2004), linguistic taxonomy (i.e. verbal class) and surface structure taxonomy, (i.e. omission, addition, misinformation) were highlighted and errors were quantified. To better analyze the violation in the corpus data of the participants, following each table, a qualitative data analysis and judgment of erroneous expressions was performed. The explanation of errors, the source and the reason of error occurrence based on the linguistic system of two languages, EFG (Halliday, 2004) and MSA (Ryding, 2010) were discussed.

To perform error evaluation, all or a subset of errors identified in EA were selected and the criteria on which the errors were to be judged was decided specially the gravity of errors. The error evaluation instrument ranked errors from most serious to the least serious considering the interference with the comprehensibility of their utterances. To increase reliability and generalizability of the results two experts in the field revised the study.

3. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The findings of the EA were discussed quantitatively and qualitatively, then a significant qualitative correlation between the social influence of MSA on the use of English verbs reflected in the essays of Lebanese 3rd year secondary EFL learners was observed.

3.1 Quantitative Analysis

All the essays were corrected and many errors were detected, but this paper is concerned with the verbal class only, refer to Figure 1. The quantitative analysis using the excel sheet revealed that the total number of errors was 3118 out of 18120 words, out of which 1096 errors were pertinent to verbs and tense errors, which formed 35% of all their IL errors; this reflects a serious value.

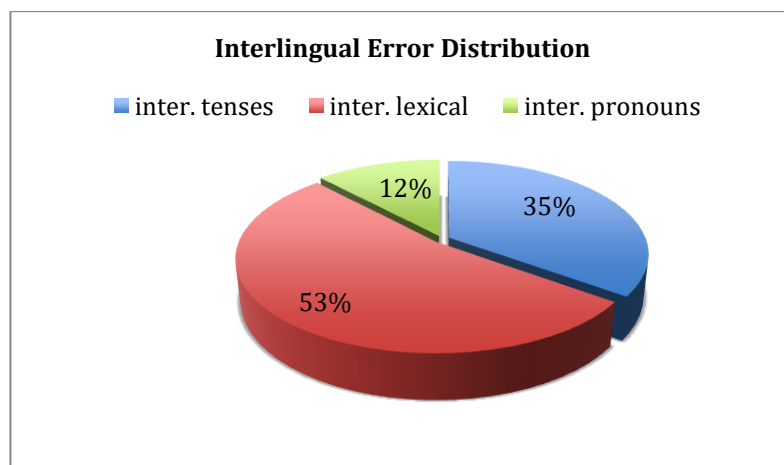


Figure 1: Proportion value of all Interlingual errors

3.2 Qualitative Analysis

To support the quantitative analysis of the verbal class in this study, a qualitative analysis following EA was performed, and tables according to different linguistic taxonomies were formed. Samples of participants' work were selected randomly for content analysis, and displayed in independent tables.

3.2.1 The Interlingual Pattern of Verb to Be

Table 1: The Interlingual pattern of Verb to Be

Student	Erroneous expression/ construction	Linguistic category: verb to be	Surface structure
S1, SE 200w	and the children Δ alone/ the children are left alone	verb to be pres. pl +v-ed passive	Om
S12, Lit. 420w	all their work Δ to clean/ their work is just cleaning... <u>and we still</u> till now Δ Δ Δ <u>say</u> about modernity...but where Δ Δ Δ?/ till now we have been speaking ...but where are we heading to?	V to be 3 rd p sing pres. Have+been+v-ing V to be pl pres. +v- ed	Om
S8, Lit. 310w			

There is a pattern of omission of verb *to be* in the corpus data of most of the participants, which is realized as follows (see Table 1):

1- the primary tense of verb *to be*, in simple past and simple present forms as a Finite element only, rather

than a fusion of Finite with a Predicator in simple present tense *is/are* was completely avoided and omitted. If we take the example of student (S) 12, who wrote:

... all their work Δ to clean...
 [...kul shighlon al tanzif ...] instead of
 ...their work **is** just cleaning...

We find that the colloquial Arabic L1 was transferred to English L2, people usually say “kul shighlon al tanzif”, which means “their job **is** just cleaning”, where interference was reflected in the negative transfer of the linguistic aspect of verbless equational sentences in MSA. As Ryding (2010) said, it refers to a predication that is specifically verbless, a *jumla ismiyya*, where verb ‘to be’ (*kaan-a*) is normally not used in the present tense indicative; it is simply understood (p. 58).

2- the secondary tense of verb *to be* in a verbal group as a finite, temporal operator in a combination of presentness (be) and pastness (V-en) for the perfective tense ‘to be in a present condition resulting from a past event’, in active and passive voice to denote a state was omitted. If we take another example from S1 such as:

...and the children Δ alone
 [... wa al awlad bi moufradihem] instead of
 ... the children are left home alone.

We may find that the passive voice was violated, because in Arabic the passive is construed through a change in the internal morphological vowel. There was a nonuse of *be+v-ed* and verb *to be* was omitted again as a result of the negative transfer of the linguistic aspect of verbless equational sentences and deficiency of tenses in MSA. In colloquial Arabic, people usually say “wa al awlad bi moufradihem” which means “the children are left alone”.

When it comes to Auxiliary *been* in *have been +v-ing*, it was realized that the present perfect progressive form was violated as well. For example S8, who wrote:

and we still till now $\Delta \Delta \Delta$ say about modernity...but where $\Delta \Delta \Delta$?
 [wa ma zilna lighayat alaan natahadath aan al tatawor... walakin ila ayn?] instead of
 up till now, we have been talking about modernism... but where are we heading to?

we find that the linguistic aspect the nonuse of perfective tense *have+been+v-ing* in “have been speaking” was negatively transferred. The sentence was transliterated from colloquial Arabic where people say “wa ma zilna lighayat alaan natahadath aan al tatawor...” which is incorrect in English and should be “up till now, we have been talking”. In the second part of the sentence instead of saying “but where are we heading to?” the learner transferred the non-use of *be+v-ing* and said “walakin ila ayn?” which means “but where?” whereas it gives a full meaning in Arabic but not in English. To Ryding (2010), verb *to be* in the Arabic present tense doesn't exist, nor the imperfect/present tense *al-muDaarii*, for incompleted actions corresponds to both the English present and present continuous tenses; in Arabic there is no distinction between these two.

Hence, the use of verb *to be*, was violated frequently and its nonuse was transferred negatively to EFL writings, in its primary and secondary tenses: verb *to be* in a verbal group as a finite, as a temporal operator in a combination of presentness (be) and pastness (V-en) for the perfective tense, as an auxiliary *been* in *have been +v-ing*. The two main tenses in MSA are: the Perfect Arabic past tense *al-maaDii*, which equates in most respects with English past tense and past perfect; and the Imperfect/present tense *al-muDaarii*, that corresponds to both the English present and present continuous tenses. Not only there is no distinction between these in Arabic, but also the present perfect tense does not exist at all.

3.2.2 The Interlingual Pattern of Verb to Have

Table 2: The Interlingual pattern of Verb to Have

Student	Erroneous expression/ construction	Linguistic category: verb to have	Surface structure
S30, SE 222w	but as <u>the</u> time Δ <u>forward</u> /as time has passed	Have +v-ed	Om/ Misinf.
S20, Lit. 400w	that opinion <u>is being</u> vanished.../ that opinion has been vanished	Have+been+v-ed	Om.
	to show <u>the whole</u> people that we Δ <u>made</u> many	Have+been+v-ing	Om/Misinf.

S9, SE 350w	<u>huge things</u> /to prove to the world that we have been attaining important achievements		
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As seen in Table 2, there was a pattern of omission of verb *to have* in the corpus data of most of the participants. Verb *to have* as a finite, temporal operator expressing tense in its secondary tense was omitted. In a verbal group, it is the constituent that functions as Finite plus Predictor in a combination of presentness and pastness of the perfective tense in active voice and passive voice to denote a state. In secondary finite non-modal tense *have + V-en*, indicates past in present (Halliday, 2004, p. 340) and *finite have in have been v-en* indicates past perfective *v-en* passive form. If we choose a sample of what S30 wrote as:

but as the time Δ forward ...

[walakin kula ma al waket takaddam...] instead of

but as time has passed...

we find that the expression “time Δ forward ...” was a negative transfer from the NL of the learner because in colloquial Arabic people say “walakin kula ma al waket takaddam ...” instead of “as time passes or has passed...” The learner omitted verb *to have*, used an adverb instead ‘forward’. MSA doesn’t have a one to one correspondence to the auxiliary *has/have*; it is deficient in tenses. The Perfect Arabic past tense *al-maaDii* equates in most respects with English past tense and past perfect; and the Imperfect/present tense *al-muDaarii* corresponds to both the English present and present continuous tenses, the non-existence of present perfect tense in Arabic. That’s why a nonuse of perfective tense *have+v-ed* was revealed here as a negative transfer/interference from L1 to L2.

Speaking of building up the ‘present in past in present’ tense in EFG, if we take what S9 wrote:

to show the whole people that we Δ made many huge things

[li-nouzher kul al aalam innahu aamalna al aadid min al ashy-aa al dakhma] instead of

to prove to the world that we have been attaining important achievements

we see that, the expression “we Δ made many huge things” was a direct translation from NL “li-nouzher kul al aalam innahu aamalna al aadid min al ashy-aa al dakhma” whereas, the more proper way to say it is “we have been attaining important achievements”. We notice that there was a violation of the word sequence *has been attaining*, which consists of a finite verb *has* in present; and an auxiliary verb *been* in past (*have +v-en* in *been* is in the past passive participle form) and a lexical verb *attain* expressed by present/active participle form *V-ing* and verb to *be* plus the *-ing* in *attaining*. Verb *have + ‘present in past in present’* tense in EFG is omitted and Interlanguage was reflected, because MSA doesn’t have a one to one correspondence to the auxiliary *has/have*; and it is deficient in tenses.

3.2.3 The Interlingual Pattern of Verb to Do

Table 3: The Interlingual pattern of Verb to Do

Student	Erroneous expression/ construction	Linguistic category: verb to do	Surface structure
S22, Lit. 425w	<u>what time Δ it needs for ...growth/</u> how much time does it need to grow...	does+inf., interr	Om
S44, SV 400w	Is technology efficient or Δ result in number of negative effects?/ Is technology efficient or does it result in a number of negative effects?	does+inf., interr	Om
S51, SG 225w	<u>at the second hand if women isn’t working and she is standing in her home.../</u> on the other hand, if women don’t work but stay home...	do+neg.	Om

There was a pattern of dropping verb *to do* in the corpus data of the participants as seen in Table 3. If we take a sample of what S44, wrote:

what time Δ it needs for ...growth

[kam min al waket yahtaj laynmu] instead of

how much time does it need to grow...

we may find that instead of saying “how much time does it need to grow...” the

learner said “what time Δ it needs for ...growth” the *finite do* was omitted as a result of negative transfer/interference of Arabic, where the sentence was directly translated from NL “kam min al waket yahtaj laynmu” and there was an omission of *do*. Simply because MSA doesn’t have a one to one correspondence to the finite *do/es/did*, nor does it use the temporal verbal operator with the indicative, wh-interrogative like EFG, so Interlanguage was reflected.

3.2.4 The Interlingual Pattern of Modals

Table 4: The Interlingual pattern of Modals

Student	Erroneous expression/ construction	Linguistic category: modal verbs	Surface structure
S41, SV 260w	nuclear reaction ... <u>danger</u> us ... <u>danger</u> our <u>body</u> health <u>such</u> it Δ <u>make</u> skin cancer, many <u>genital</u> disease/ nuclear reaction ... is hazardous to our health, for example it might cause skin cancer and many genetic diseases	Might+v	Om
S67, SG300w	if they watch t.v., the news of all the world <u>are</u> in <u>there</u> hands/if they watch t.v., they will have access to the news of the whole world.	Will+have conditional	Misinf.
S13, Lit. 170w	The journey of women <u>to have</u> it was long but <u>she</u> Δ achieve .../ women have come a long way but they could’ve achieved ...	Could +v	Om
S63, Lit. 420w	The steps that women Δ <u>make</u> <u>it</u> we Δ need days <u>and</u> days.../ if we want to do what women usually do, we might need many days ...	Might+v conditional	Om/Av.

As seen in Table 4, there was a pattern of omission of Modal operators in probable clauses and in the result-clause of conditional probable *if-clauses*:

1-the pattern of nonuse of modal operators in probable clauses and sentences:

if we take a sample of what S41 wrote, such as:

nuclear reaction ... danger us ... danger our body health such it Δ make skin cancer, many genital disease...

[Al tafa3oul al Nawawi ...khatar 3leina... khatar la sohat jismina mathalan yaamal saratan el jilid, wal 3adid min al amrad al ouirathiwah...] instead of

nuclear reaction ... is hazardous to our health, for example it might cause skin cancer and many genetic diseases...

we could see that the sentence was a word for word translation from Arabic. For instance instead of saying “it might cause skin cancer” the learner said “it Δ make skin cancer” same as in colloquial Arabic “yaamal saratan el jilid”. IL was reflected in omitting the modal operators in clauses and sentences where probability and possibility was required, transferring the sense directly from their NL. Because, some Arabic words that denote modality don’t have exact lexical equivalent of English modal verbs such as: *can, could, may, might, will, would, shall, should, must, ought to*.

2-the pattern of omission of modal operators in the result-clause of conditional probable *if-clause* in the simple present tense, to express future time was reflected in what S67 wrote:

... if they watch t.v., the news of all the world are in there hands

[... in hadarou t.v., kul akhbar el aalam takoun bayn aydihem] instead of

... if they watch t.v., they will have access to the world news

in this sentence “if they watch t.v., the news of all the world are in there hands” there was a direct translation from colloquial idiomatic Arabic, usually said: “in hadarou t.v., kul akhbar el aalam takoun bayn aydihem”, whereas the proper way to say it is: “if they watch t.v., they will have access to the news of the whole world.” Interlanguage was reflected in the omission of English modal operator *will* in the result-clause of the conditional probable *if-clause* in the simple present tense, to express future time; in MSA, the consequent clause *jawab el shart* gives the meaning of the modal without having the need to use it.

To conclude the findings and the discussion here, the quantitative analysis using excel sheet revealed that the total number of errors was 3118 out of 18120 words. A total of 3118 errors were counted, out of which 1096 errors were pertinent to verbs and tense errors. The verbal category formed 35% of all their IL errors, which reflects a similarity with Hamdi’s (2017) findings (seen in the introduction part of this study), the verbal errors of Tunisian EFL learners that comprised 33,33% of the total errors. These results indicate serious values.

Moreover, the qualitative content analysis, following EA of Ellis & Barkhuizen’s (2009) technique, defined the linguistic taxonomy of the verbal errors, as seen in the hereafter summary.

- A pattern of omission of verb *to be* in its primary form was reflected.

The linguistic aspect of verbless equational sentences in MSA, a *jumla ismiyya*, is normal, verb ‘to be’ *kaan-a* is neither used in present tense indicative form, nor in secondary tense form, in a verbal group as a finite, temporal operator.

- A pattern of omission of verb *to have* as a finite, temporal operator expressing tense in its secondary tense was reflected. In EFG a verbal group is the constituent that functions as Finite plus Predictor in the perfective tense in active voice and passive voice to denote a state. In the secondary finite non-modal tense *have + V-en*, to indicate past in present and *finite have* in *have been v-en* to indicate past perfective v-en passive form. Whereas, MSA doesn’t have a one to one correspondence to the auxiliary *has/have* and it is deficient in tenses.
- A pattern of omission of the *finite do* was revealed. MSA doesn’t have a one to one correspondence to the finite *do/es/did*, nor does it use the temporal verbal operator with the indicative, wh-interrogative.
- A pattern of omission of Modal operators in probable clauses and in the result-clause of conditional probable *if-clauses* was revealed. Some Arabic words that denote modality don’t have the exact lexical equivalent of English modal verbs such as: *can, could, may, might, will, would, shall, should, must, ought to*. And when it comes to the use of modal operators in the result-clause of conditional probable *if-clause* in the simple present tense, to express future time, the consequent clause *jawab el shart* in MSA gives the meaning of the modal without having the need to use it.

Furthermore, the surface structure taxonomy varied among misinformation, omission, avoidance, transliteration, and addition as the use of unnecessary fillers to fill the gap. Although this contrastive analysis of verbs in EFG (Halliday, 2004) and MSA (Ryding, 2010) revealed the deficiency in MSA tenses, however, the learners couldn’t overcome the negative transfer/interference of their NL MSA, because of their overall weakness.

4. CONCLUSION

This paper discussed the social influence of MSA, the transfer from Arabic, and correlated it to the erroneous use of English verbs in essays written by Lebanese third secondary EFL learners. The findings analyzed quantitatively revealed that the verbal category formed 35% of all their IL errors, which reflects a serious value. Those analyzed qualitatively through EA highlighted the linguistic taxonomy (e.g. verb to be, to have as a finite, the temporal operator finite do, modal verb operators [i.e. can, could, may, might, will, would, shall, should, must, ought to]) and the surface structure taxonomy (e.g. misinformation, omission, avoidance, transliteration and addition). Verbs in EFG (Halliday, 2004) and MSA (Ryding, 2010) were analyzed contrastively and the source of these errors was IL, which means that the learners resorted to IL because of their overall weakness.

I suggest that specialized authorities, curriculum designers and EFL teachers take IL into consideration in the design of EFL teaching syllabi, perform a broad and systematic evaluation and review of the implementation of the English curriculum in order to empirically assess its impact and determine the factors that affect the learners’ proficiency and academic achievement. They should integrate technology and contemporary pedagogical practices, expose learners to authentic language, and bridge the gap created by the textbooks and the curriculum.

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