# Causes of spelling errors

#

Getting insight into the differences that exist between Arabic and English may be useful to get a clear perceptions of spelling errors committed by Arab learners. Arabic and English are two distinct language in almost all the linguistic feature such as the nature linguistic features for both languages, spelling system, phonological representations etc. Thus, these differences will be found and describe in the following portions.

## 1.2 The Nature of Mother Tongue (Arabic)

The nature of Arabic language is one of main causes of spelling errors among Arab learners. (Corder, 1993) explained that the mother tongue causes serious difficulties if two languages are linguistically distant such as English and Arabic. In addition previous studies have showed a common background information about Arabic language, which differ from English language (Ashour, 2017; Abu-Rabia, & Sammour, 2013 Abu-Rabia, & Taha, (2006); Allaith, 2010) state that Arabic language is a Semitic language, while English rely on phonetic bases .The Arabic alphabet comprise of 28 letters, and it is written and read from right to left. In addition, Arabic alphabet has a feature of variation of letter's form; the letters from changes according to its position in the word, there are four forms for each letter, which are independent, initial, medial and final. Furthermore, there are reading sings integrated with the words and placed over and under the letters (diacritical). (Abu-Rabia, 2001) sates that the diacritical signs that contribute phonology to the Arabic alphabet. (Alliath, 2010) "Arabic language is a consonantal language, in which only consonant and long vowels are represented by letters p.9". He adds that many of Arabic consonants are similar to the English consonants, expect for the sound /p/,/g/,/v/. This implies that phonological difference between both languages could be a predictable variable for spelling errors done by language learners. Another language scholar (Zarka, 2013) infer in his study that Arabic language does not exhibit the voiceless stop consonant /p/ whereas the English does. Thus Arab English learners tend to resort the voiced stop/b/ instead and use voicing as repair strategy. The case do the absence of the phoneme/v/ in Arabic causes the learners to use the sound that exhibit in their native language the voiceless/f/, as well as the phoneme/g/.in an attempt to examine the influence of mother tongue Arabic on spelling performance. Moreover, (Allaith&Joshi, 2011) compared the performance of six and four grader students (English native speaker students with other EFL Arab students), and found out that Arab learners tend to be confuse the spelling of the word that contain the phonemes /f/, /v/, /p/and /b/.

 In other words, novel phonemes causes the native speaker of Arabic to substitute the novel phonemes with others non-novel due to their nonexistence in Arabic. Additionally, (Abu-Rabia&Share&Manssour, 2003) state that, in literary Arabic there is a predictable sound-symbol correspondence between the letter and the sound. It is important to assert as (Russak&Saieht- Haddad, 2010) found in their study that phonological structure that are unique to the target language and does not exist in the native language causes a common difficulty for language learners. Further a unique characteristic for Arabic language, it has two forms the first one is literary Arabic and the second is spoken Arabic this phenomena called Diglossic (Abu-Rabia & Sammour, 2013; Abu-Rabia &Taha,2006) agree that Arab native speakers use the spoken Arabic in their daily communication purposes , spoken Arabic is a local dialect that has no written form. Whereas, Arab use the literary Arabic for reading, writing and speaking on all official occasions. (Saighet Haddad, 2007) presents in her study those novel phonological phonemes that are not exhibit to learners from their oral language are meaningfully more challenging to access than those are available to them from thierL1.

To sum up, Arab learners tend to rely on their mother tongue as an additional source for learning and developing their target language (English).

## 1.3 The Role of Mother Tongue in Language Learning

(First language, native language, mother tongue the same terms which refers to learner's first acquired language). (Gass&Selinker, 1992) state that In the process of language acquisition, it develops from simple structure to highly complex structure in a progressive way. Language acquisition is a complex process that depend upon major language's aspects, one basic one of them is the proficiency of L1. (Gass&Selinker, 1992) declare that the process of language acquisition is a continua process. This implies that the mother tongue is the starting point for the acquisition. (Troike, 2016) states in his book that the previous knowledge of mother tongue is responsible for the transfer from L1 to L2 during second language acquisition and learning development. Fundamentally, (Corder, 1993) clarify that the language acquisition development depends upon the learner's native language, the ease or difficulty of acquiring specific language features of target language depends crucially upon the similarity or difference of bore to mother tounge.in other words, similarity between both languages implied quicker and earlier acquisition ,while differences lead to slower and later language acquisition. Then, it was responsible to supposes that the order of additional language acquisition connect somehow to the nature of the mother tongue. Additionally, (Al-Joshi , 1994)states in his study that mother tongue can influence the acquisition of L2 in different way, on one hand learners face particular linguistic aspects in the target language, which their mother tongue has no equivalent to them in the target language , such as spelling aspect that found in English pronunciation silent letter in English which does not found in Arabic spelling. Thus, learners tend to use different startigres to facilitate their language learning.

# 2. The Nature of the Target language (English)

## 1.2 English orthography

One fundamental step toward understanding the difficulties that face EFL (English Foreign Learners) particularly Arab learners is recognizing the depth of English orthography. Orthography according to (Tavosains, 2007) refers to the accurate way to write a word in any language. If a learner know to speak the language, he will know how to write. This can be accurate in case the language has one to one correspondence between phonemes and graphemes. In contrasts, if the language such as English has irregularity in phonemes - graphemes correspondence, it will challenge the learners in writing the accurate words. (Venezjy, 2011) adds, "Orthography considered the recognition of morphemic elements as important as the recognition of phonemic ones.p.29". (Saiegh-Haddad&Geva, 2008) clarify that alphabetic orthographies map the oral language at the level of phoneme. They add that in shallow orthographies the relation between the spilling of the word and its pronunciation is regular and reliable. Further, orthography can be predicted on grapheme-to phoneme conversion, while in deep orthography (such as English) individual graphemes may map into a variety of different phoneme.

(Cook, 1997) indicate an essential aspect that English spelling system production, which rely on letter combination rather than sound –letter correspondence. In fact, English includes several of letter combinations of a single sound, for example, the letter (c) can be pronounced /c/ o /k/. The multiplicity of letter-sound combination can consider as fundamental indictor that cause learners' misspelling. Thus, (Gass&Selinker, 1992) add that the acquisition of the pronunciation of second language is indeed largely a matter of progressively reformation the mother tongue phonological system in the direction of the target language. (Al-Jarf, 2010) states that spelling errors can be categorized into two types, phonological and orthographic problem. The phonological problem refers to the error in which misspelled word does not sound like the target word. While, the orthographic problems refers to those instance in which the misspelled word sound like the written word, but the written form grapheme used for misspelled part which does not correspond with the target phoneme.

## 2.3 Inconsistence of English Spelling System

The unreliable correspondence between the written and spoken language consider an exotic feature of English language, thus it represents a series problem among English foreign learners.in a recent study. Bourassa and Treiman , 2001) state in the article that "successful spelling performance involves the process of segmenting the spoken words into their phonemic components, and then selecting the appropriate grapheme to represent the phoneme p.172". (Said, 2018) indicates that each sound of English language is represents by variety of graphemes or by sequence of letters. Moreover, any other latter in English represented more than one sound, or it may not represented any sound at all (silent letter). (Cook, 1997) states that there are 44 sounds which can be represented by different combination of 26 letters. (Umera – Okeke, 2008) indicate the problems in sound and spelling of English, and they classified them under the following headings

 • The same letter does not always represent the same sound.

 • The same sound is not always represented by the same letter.

 • Some letters are not pronounced at all (silent letters).

• We pronounce sounds in some places where there is no letter.

 • There are variants of the plural and past tense morpheme.

(Fender ,2008) states that part of difficulty may be due to the fact that Arabic language literacy skill develop in the fully vowelized script with reliable and consistent graphemes -phonemes mapping. In contrast, English has some variable grapheme-phonemes spelling even for consonants which arguably no straightforward phoneme-grapheme correspondence. (Bourassa and Treiman , 2001) demonstrate that fact that the ability of selecting the accurate grapheme to represent the phonological depiction of words, learners are faced with different choices. For example some consonants have more than one possible spelling pattern, and the suitable choice depend on phoneme's position in the word. (Odlin,1989) clarify in his book that the differences in phonemic inventories can cause perceptual confusion during the process of language acquisition, since the phonemic inventory of the native language dose not totally impede perception of foreign language word. Therefore, language learners are capable of adjust their performance of sounds that come closer to target language.

# Source of Error

For analyzing purposes, it is necessary to explain the distinction between the mistakes and errors, in order to determine the source of error. (Brown,2000) states that language learners commit errors, and these errors arise from several sources such as interlingual errors of interference, intra lingual errors with in the target language, the sociolinguistic context and cognitive strategies. Surce of error can be classified in various ways, for example (Selinker, 1972) categorize the sourse of errors as follows:

1-Lnguage transfer

2- Transfer of training

3- Strategies of second language learning

4-startigies of second language communication

5- Overgeneralization of target language.

Other researchers such as( James, 2013; Brown ,2000 ; Oldin , 1989) point out that learners' errors are caused by different processes which include transfer, overgeneralization and communication strategies.

## Errors vs. Mistakes

Essentially, it is important to make a distinction between mistakes and errors in order to analyze the learners' language performance. In suitable way (Brown, 2000) states that mistakes refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or a slip, in that it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly. While error is a noticeable deviation from adult grammar of a native speaker, reflects the competence of the learner. Contrastively, errors cannot be self-corrected, while mistakes can self-corrected if the deviation is mention.

## Interlingua (interference)

Interligual errors considers as a considerable source of errors among SLA (second language learners and foreign language learners. The term was first use by (Selinker, 1972) that indicate the linguistic knowledge of an L2, and the errors denote the first language interference are termed interlingual .(Gass and Selinker,1992) define interlingual as a system intermediate between mother tongue and target language, in addition they use it to refer to "the temporary or permanent use of linguistic feature from one language in the performance of another p.26". (corder,1981) suggest that interlanguage is learner's language is a systematic production of native language and other learning language, in other words the learner's production of language is distinctive and comprise features from target language and acquired language.(Oldin, 1989; Brown, 2000) define language transfer (interference) as carry over previous systematic or linguistic knowledge to subsequent learning. (oldin, 1989) adds that " it is the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language, that has been previously acquired. P. 27". Transfer can be classified into two types: positive transfer, negative transfer. Positive transfer occurs when the preceding linguistic knowledge benefits the target language acquisition, while negative transfer occur when previous performance disrupts the performance of the second language. (brown,2000) clarify that negative language inference is surly the most immediately noticeable source of errors among language learners.(fender,2008) dictate that one way that native language influence target language spelling is in the transfer of phonological knowledge or the transfer of grapheme- phoneme correspondence skills. In other words, transfer not only the familiarity of the letter but also corresponding letter mapping.(Oldin, 1989) categorize the errors in speech and in writing into three types which are: substitution (for example Arab learners occasionally commit spelling errors in substitution the letter p with the letter b in their writing and speech), calques and alteration.

## Intra-lingual error

(Kaweera, 2013) states that these kind of errors can be defined as the deviate form of language, which actually caused by conflicting information of the target language. These errors are not related to language transfer; however, they contribute to target language itself. In addition (Lott, 1983) adds that intrligual errors reflect general features of the rule learning such as overgeneralization, incomplete application of rule ,ignorance of rule and failure to learn.

# Related Studies

 Native language interference has become a worldwide matter among linguistic researchers, consequently they have begun to examine and identifying the learners' errors for getting rational recognitions for such errors. Additionally the present study focus on the reasons set behind committing spelling errors among EFL (English Foreign Learner), in particular Arab Israeli Learners. Number of studies have been conducted in different countries such as (Allaith and Joshi, 2011) manage a study to examine the influence phonological system of L1 on L2; he compares the spelling performance of Arab students to performance of English native language participants through using spelling test. The finding is demonstrating g the importance of phonology in spelling as well as the influence of mother tongue on spelling performance. Similarly, (Al- Jayousi, 1994) states that errors attributed to number of causes such as irregularity of orthographic system and mother tongue interference.(Saiegh-Haddad and Geva, 2007) show in their study the significant correlation between phonological awareness in English and Arabic, that phonological awareness predicted reading cross- linguistically.in other study which ahs conducted in Israel (Russak & Saiegh-Hadda,2010) have conducted a study to investigate the relationship between phonological awareness in (L1) Hebrew and (L2) English, among normal reading and reading disabled Hebrew native speaking adults. (Russak & Saiegh-Hadda,2010) they confirm the fact, that the process of acquiring reading in a specific language is contingent on awareness of the phonological structure of that language, not only among normal readers, but also among disabled readers.it is important to indicate that the present study is based on (Russak & Saiegh-Hadda,2010) for examining Arab learner's spelling performance.

# Limitation of the Study

The study sustain some limitations, first the study manage among Arab Israel learners and it does not contain other native participant, this may affect the research results. Therefore, participants are from the same Elementary School. Thus, the research does not contain other pupils from other schools. As a result, the findings cannot be generalize to all the section of Arab learners in Israel.

#

Corder, S. P. (1982). *Error analysis and interlanguage* (Vol. 198, No. 1). Oxford University Press.‏

zarka, E., & El Said, A. M. (2013). *The Pronunciation Errors of L1 Arabic Learners of L2 English: The Role of Modern Standard Arabic and Vernacular Dialects Transfer* (Doctoral dissertation, The British University in Dubai (BUiD)).

Ashour, H' M'. (2017). Major Differences between Arabic and English Pronounciation Systems: A Contrastive Analysis Study. *Aijlls Magazine*, 132-150.

Al-Jarf, R. (2010). Spelling error corpora in EFL. *Sino-US English Teaching*, *7*(1), 6-15.‏

Abu-Rabia, S., & Taha, H. (2006). Phonological errors predominate in Arabic spelling across grades 1–9. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, *35*(2), 167.‏

Abu-Rabia, S., Share, D., & Mansour, M. S. (2003). Word recognition and basic cognitive processes among reading-disabled and normal readers in Arabic. *Reading and writing*, *16*(5), 423-442

.‏ Allaith, Z. A. A. (2010). *Aanlysis of Spelling Performance in English Among Students Whose First Language is Arabic*(Doctoral dissertation, Texas A & M University).‏

Allaith, Z. A., & Joshi, R. M. (2011). Spelling performance of English consonants among students whose first language is Arabic. *Reading and Writing*, *24*(9), 1089-1110.‏

Abu-Rabia, S., & Sammour, R. (2013). Spelling errors’ analysis of regular and dyslexic bilingual Arabic-English students. *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics*, *3*(1), 58-68.‏

Brown, H. D. (2000). Principles of language learning and teaching.‏

Cook, V. J. (1997). L2 users and English spelling. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *18*(6), 474-488.‏

Gass, S. M., & Selinker, L. (Eds.). (1992). *Language transfer in language learning: Revised edition* (Vol. 5). John Benjamins Publishing.‏

Saiegh-Haddad, E. (2007). Linguistic constraints on children's ability to isolate phonemes in Arabic. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, *28*(4), 607-625.‏

Venezky, R. L. (2011). *The structure of English orthography* (Vol. 82). Walter de Gruyter.

‏Tavosanis, M. (2007). A causal classification of orthography errors in web texts. In *IJCAI-2007: Workshop on Analytics for Noisy Unstructured Text Data* (pp. 99-106).‏

Hanna, P. R. (1966). Phoneme-grapheme correspondences as cues to spelling improvement.

‏

Umera-Okeke, N. (2008). Spelling and Phonetic Inconsistencies in English: A Problem for Learners of English as a Foreign/Second Language. *African Research Review*, *2*(1), 64-83.‏

Corder, S. P. (1983). A role for the mother tongue. *Language transfer in language learning*, *1*, 85-97.‏

Pennington, M. C., & Richards, J. C. (1986). Pronunciation revisited. *TESOL quarterly*, *20*(2), 207-225.‏

Figueredo, L. (2006). Using the known to chart the unknown: A review of first-language influence on the development of English-as-a-second-language spelling skill. *Reading and Writing*, *19*(8), 873-905.‏

Fender, M. (2008). Spelling knowledge and reading development: Insights from Arab ESL learners. *Reading in a foreign language*, *20*(1), 19-42.‏

Kaweera, C. (2013). Writing Error: A Review of Interlingual and Intralingual Interference in EFL Context. *English language teaching*, *6*(7), 9-18.

‏ Gass, S. M., & Selinker, L. (Eds.). (1992). *Language transfer in language learning: Revised edition* (Vol. 5). John Benjamins Publishing.

‏ Lott, D. (1983). Analysing and counteracting interference errors. *ELT journal*, *37*(3), 256-261

Richards, J. C. (1974). *Error analysis: Perspectives on second language acquisition*. Routledge.‏

James, C. (2013). *Errors in language learning and use: Exploring error analysis*. Routledge.‏

Selinker, L. (1972). Interlanguage. *IRAL-International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, *10*(1-4), 209-232.‏

Bourassa, D. C., & Treiman, R. (2001). Spelling development and disability. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*.‏

Al-Bereiki, S. A., & Al-Mekhlafi, A. M. (2016). Spelling errors of Omani EFL students: Causes and remedies. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research*, *3*(7), 20-46.‏

Jayousi, A., & Thaher, M. (2011). *Spelling errors of Arab students: Types, causes and teachers' responses* (Doctoral dissertation).‏