

Sources of Syntactic Errors in Yemeni Learners' English Compositions: A Psycholinguistic Analysis

Mohammed Q. Al-Shormani
University of Ibb,
Yemen

Abstract

It goes without saying that probing deeply the sources of errors committed by an L2 learner is a psycholinguistic process which is not an easy task. In fact, investigations into learner's errors reveal that English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) teachers expect their students to speak errorless English (Burt, 1975), however, errors keep recurring and recurring and this makes our task as language teachers rather difficult. However, this does not mean we surrender! We have to seek answers to such questions and investigate such errors and their sources setting our ultimate goal to how to make our students comprehend what they learn, and to how to understand their problematic areas so that we could contribute in solving them. Thus, this study aims at providing empirical data for the sources of syntactic errors committed by Yemeni Arabic-speaking University learners of English. 50 learners selected randomly from the third year, Department of English, Ibb University, Yemen participated in this study. To classify the errors, a comprehensive error taxonomy based on James's (1998) and Al-Shormani's (2012) was used. The sources of such errors were classified into four categories, viz. *L1-transfer*, *L2-influence*, *L1&L2* and *unrecognized*. The analysis shows that *L1-transfer* scored (27.90%), *L2-influence* scored (63.73%), *L1&L2* scored (6.99%) and *unrecognized* source scored (1.38%) of the syntactic errors committed in this study. The findings have implications for L2 syntax learning and teaching which could be generalized to other ESL and/or EFL contexts.

Keywords: SLA, Yemeni Learners, Error Sources, L1-transfer, L2-influence