An investigation of Semantic Interlingual Errors in the Writing of Libyan English as Foreign Language Learners

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Abstract
The aim of this paper is to investigate some semantic interlingual errors in the writing performance of Libyan English as Foreign Language Learners (LEFLLS). The study seeks to analyze these errorsthat appear in the learners' written production. The data was gathered from 25 essays written by 25 Libyan postgraduates majoring in different fields. It was collected and organized according to the errors committed. Errors taxonomy adapted from James' (1998) and Al-Shormani and Al-Sohbani's (2012) was used in identifying and analyzing these errors. Semantic errors were classified into five categories namely formal mis-selection, formal mis-formation, lexical choice, collocation and lexico-grammatical choice. The semantic errors identified were 346. These errors were classified into four categories namely, formal misformation (46.7%), distortion due to spelling (32.4%), lexical choice (40.6%) and lexicogrammatical choice (2.4%). The results show that direct translation from the first language (L1), assumed synonym and misselection of letters sub-categories score the highest number of the errors, i.e.14.2%, 13.08% and 12.08% respectively. While the sub-category, both collocations incorrect error was the lowest (0.52%). The other errors take the form of paraphrase (11.5%) and Idiomacity (8.5%). Two main sources have been found to be the cause behind these errors namely, L1 influence and insufficient knowledge about the second language (L2). Moreover, cultural differences between L1 and L2 had its impact in the written products of Libyan students.
Keywords: acquisition, culture, collocational, lexical, lexicogrammatical, semantic error

Introduction

The role of interference between L1 and L2 has been considered as the most important factor in facilitating or inhibiting the learners to acquire a new language. It is believed that languages affect each other and some elements of one language can be transferred into another in the learning process. Cook (2003) states that everybody thinks his or her L1 has an impact on his or her L2. He further elaborates that the accent of non-native speakers exhibits this transfer as an English speaker can recognize whether the interlocutor is French or Japanese after speaking a few words of English. In line with this perspective Gass and Selinker (2008) postulate that in the second language acquisition (SLA) field, learners rely broadly on their native language when they attempt to acquire a new one. Ellis (2003) also states that the behaviorist theory by Skinner (1957) emphasizes the impact of interference from the previous knowledge. They mentioned how earlier knowledge of L1 intervenes and inhibits the learners to obtain a new one. As a result, it dominates and imposes its structure on the new language that s/he wants to learn. Thus, there is a vital role of L1 on all language skills especially writing. It is obvious that there is a close relationship between linguistic structures and writing and any attempt to disassociate this factor might lead to increasing the possibility of problems in ESL writing.

Writing in L2 is the most intricate skill to learn. Mastering this skill is difficult as the L2 learner has to go through a challenging process. This difficulty exists due to many reasons such as, the difference between L1 and L2 in terms of linguistic knowledge, the interference of the L1 structures in producing the L2 items, the steps and procedures that L2 learners should follow and the impact of the L1 cultural background on the acquisition of the L2. Many researchers have argued that the L2 writing process is considered a difficult task due to different linguistic knowledge, negative transfer of L1 structures and different cultural concepts (Silva, 1993; Hinkel, 2004; Lee, 2005; Martinez, 2005; Al-Hassan, 2013 & Alotaibi, 2014).

In writing in English, the L2 students are confronted with the challenge of writing in a different language while s/he already has acquired a L1. Richards (2003) contends that the L2 writers can be recognized by the difficulty they face in writing in English. They are different from native English speakers in terms of linguistic knowledge. Having acquired one system of writing in L1(Arabic) can confuse a learner in the learning of writing of a L2 (English) and cause difficulties due to the different linguistic knowledge, which further hampers a L1 learner from acquiring writing skill in L2. Saadiyah and Ching (2009) acknowledge that there is a difference between English writing done by native speakers and that of those by L2 learners. They claim that ESL learners may get confused when they write in the L2 due to the difference between L1 and L2. This is in agreement with Cook (2000) who further supports the statement that L2 learners encounter difficulties in acquiring writing skill in English due to the differences between L1 and L2. Silva cited in Richards (2003:669) also argues that "L2 writing is strategically, rhetorically and linguistically different in important ways from L1 writing". Ellis (2003) says that L1 transfer effects on the L2 learning can be tested in both aspects; "reception" listening and reading and "production" writing and speaking. Many studies have focused on the

impact of the L1 in the learning of the L2 (Bennui, 2008; Hamadouche, 2013; Al-Saraireh & Aljeradaat, 2014).Thus, it is evident that the differences between L1 and L2 are very apparent.

Abi Samra (2003:4) states that:

"Its level of difficulty varies between native speakers (NS) who think in the language used(in our case it will be English) and non-native speakers (NNS) who think in their own native language(in this case it will be Arabic). While writing, non-native speakers have, in general, to think about all those rules need to apply, rules that native speakers are supposed to have automatized. Therefore, non-native speakers are more prone to making mistakes and/or committing errors" (p.4)

It is noticed that many errors are made by the Arab students as they write their written assignments in English. Hamadouche (2013) claims that when learners rely on their L1 knowledge to write in L2, they might produce awkward texts and use some textual features which are considered odd to the L2 writing convention. As a teacher of English for several years in Libya, the corresponding author had noticed that many students have difficulties in producing written assignments in English due to the differences between the Arabic (L1) and English. Libyan students, being EFL learners, encounter more difficulties compared to other English as L2 learners. The two languages have many differences in terms of linguistic system and cultural features. They are different in many aspects such as orthographic system, grammatical structures, syntactic constituents, lexical components and elaborative language style. Shabbir and Bughio (2009) affirm that "English and Arabic are two different languages. Their alphabets, sounds, vowel patterns, pronunciation, capitalization style, articles, even the writing style are different in English". (p.75)

The Libyan learners are accustomed to write with Arabic alphabetical letters. They are read and written from right to left. This means that Arabic letters are completely different from those used in English which needs more effort to be exerted by the learners to control a new alphabetical system and avoid spelling mistakes in their writing. Thompson-Panos and Thomas-Ružić cited in Barry (2012) confirms that the differences between the Arabic alphabetical system and English alphabets were considered as the main cause to the difficulties that the learners encounter. In addition, punctuation and conjunction are not the same in both languages. This means that the probability of committing errors by EFL Libyan learners in terms of using capitalization, comma, period and some conjunction are highly expected.

The errors that Arab students commit might be due to the lack of competence in English language, traditional approach and method used in teaching English in Libyan schools especially writing skill. All of these reasons are believed to contribute to the hindrance of acquiring a correct writing method, but it is highly hypothesized that the gap and difference between the L1 and Arabic features and structures is one of the main causes of these errors and misconception. This dilemma, the interference between L1 and L2, presumably existed as one of the effects of

acquiring English by the Libyan students. Abdul Kareem (2013) asserts that Arab students faced a lot of problems when they write in English and one of the main dilemmas is their L1 (Arabic) interference with the target language (English). Khrama cited in EL-Aswad (2002) refers to some causes that lead Arab students to make mistakes and he argued that one of these reasons is the difference between Arabic and English rhetoric. It is a natural process as the learners switch to their L2, think in their L1 then translate the words into L2. Having followed these steps, the errors are expected to be committed especially when the two items or structures of L1 do not match with those from L2. In line with this, Hussein and Mohammad (2011) find that the dilemma for most Qatari University students is that they face difficulties in English writing due to negative L1 transfer. This can also be applied to the Libyan learners as their L1 is entirely different from the L2 and they think in Arabic and use the translation equivalent of L1 which does not match with the original L2 word. As a consequence, this strategy leads the Libyan learners to commit errors in their writing in English and causes breakdown in communication between the writer and receiver.

In the Libyan context, the unawareness of the difference between Arabic and English in terms of linguistic system makes the process of learning writing skill more difficult. This lack of awareness of the different characteristics and features of Arabic and English is likely to result in the confusion among the EFL Libyan students leading them to fall back on their L1 to imitate some of its features and structures and employ them in L2 writing. As a consequence, this will yield some semantic errors and odd structures in L2 written production. Thus, these factors are believed to lead the Libyan students to commit semantic errors in their English written production. Since there is scarcity of studies which tackled semantic errors committed by Libyan EFL students, many Libyan students and even some teachers are unaware of the problem of L1 interfering in producing their English writing. This is in line with Al-Shormani & Al-Sohbani (2012) who assert that "examining and studying semantic errors in SLA is an interesting and challenging area of investigation which is still fertile requiring much more research".(p.120)

Research into the written production of Libyan students and errors committed by the learners has shown that most of these studies focused on grammatical and phonological aspects whereas the semantic errors which seems to be more important had little attention by those researchers. Compared to syntactic and phonological errors, there is a dearth of studies which have tackled the semantic errors committed by EFL learners (Al-Shormani & Al-Sohbani, 2012). Moreover, the focus of language teaching has changed from the form and structure to function and content. Accordingly, this study will concentrate on semantic interlingual errors committed by EFL Libyan postgraduate students in order to find out the relationship between L1 (Arabic) transfer and its impact on their English writing. This study will aim to fill the gap by focusing on L1 transfer impact on the English writing of LEFLLS learners in terms of semantic errors. It will attempt to provide an in-depth analysis of these semantic errors.

Aim of the study

The present study aims at investigating the influence of the L1 transfer and linguistic interference on the English writing of EFL Libyan students. The emphasis is on the semantic interlingual errors that Libyan students make as they write in English. It is believed that these errors exist as a result of interference between L1 and L2 and the impact of their different linguistic structures. Thus, the study attempts to identify the frequent semantic errors caused by the negative L1 (Arabic) in writing in English among the LEFLLS.

Literature review
The role of errors analysis in investigating EFL learners' language
Error Analysis (EA) emerged in the 1960s as alternative to Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH). Ellis (2003:62) states that "Error analysis was one of the first method used in investigate learner language. It achieved considerable popularity in 1970s, replacing contrastive analysis". EA suggests that the L2 errors are caused by other factors than the L1 such as the L2 structures and communication strategies. Ellis (2003) further explains that Corder (1967) notes that errors provide the researcher with the indications of how linguistic structures were learned and these errors also functioned as devices which helped the learner in learning the L2. Hence, errors have been classified according to their sources. Schumann and Stenson (1978) highlights the sources of error which were identified by Richards (1974) such as (i) interference (ii) overgeneralization (iii) markers of transitional competence (iv) performance errors (v) strategies of communication and (vi) induced errors resulted from training transfer. These errors can be analyzed according to Ellis' (2003) steps namely collection of error sample, identification of errors, description of errors, explanation of errors and evaluation of errors.

By the 1970s, Interlanguage (IL) emerged and was used as alternative of EA. Bennui (2008) asserts that EA had widely been supplanted by studies of IL and SLA. IL is a language which is assumed to be produced by the L2 learner as s/he moves to acquire L2 competence. According to Saville-Troike (2012) the term IL refers to "the intermediate states (or interim grammars) of a learner's language as it moves toward the target L2". (p.43). Thus, IL is different from both L1 and L2. Whilst the influence of both the L1 and L2 in the learners' IL is apparent, the IL is believed to be different from both L1 and L2 through the sequence of development (Saville-Troike, 2012). According to Selinker (1972) the IL is the product of five cognitive processes namely, language transfer, transfer-of-training, strategies of L2 learning, strategies of L2 communication and overgeneralization of target language (TL) linguistic material.

Semantic errors
In this study, semantic errors are defined as "violation of the rules system particular to English language" (Al-Shormani and Al-Sohbani, 2012:121).These errors have been classified into three categories namely, lexical, collocation and lexico-grammatical (James, 1998; Jiang, 2004). This study employed Al-Shormani and Al-Sohbani's (2012:122) taxonomy which was initially based on James' (1998). This taxonomy is as follows:
I. Formal Misselection
 1. Misselection of a Prefix
    2. Misselection of a Suffix
II. Formal Misformations

   1. Direct Translation from L1
   2. Borrowing
   3. Coinage
   4. Distortion due to Spelling
        4.1. Omission of letters
        4.2. Misordering of letters
        4.3 Overinclusion of Letters
        4.4. L1-Based Spelling Errors
        4.5. Misselection of Letters
III. Lexical Choice
   1. Assumed Synonymy
   2. Derivativeness
   3. Confusion of Binary Terms
   4. Paraphrase
   5. Idiomacity
   6. Similar Forms
IV. Collocations
   1. Collocate Choice
        1.1. One Collocate Incorrect
        1.2. Both Collocates Incorrect
   2. Contextualization
   3. Wrong Forms
V. Lexicogrammatical Choice
   1. Adjectives in place of Nouns
   2. Nouns in place of Adjectives
   3. Adjectives in place Adverbs
   4. Adverbs in place of Adjectives

Methodology
Participants
       The sample of this study comprises 25Libyan postgraduate students studying at both public and private Malaysian universities. Their ages are between 20 and 45 years. They are male and female, viz, 12 male and 13 female. The respondents took general and academic English courses before they commence their high academic studies at Malaysian universities. Thus, their English level is considered to be intermediate. The rationale behind choosing these students is that they have embarked in an intensive English course and they are trained to write in English.

Procedures
       In this study, the writing task was used to elicit data. 25 respondents were required to choose one argumentative essay topic. The questions papers were distributed to 25 students and

they were asked to choose one argumentative topic and write an essay of at least 100 words within 1 hour. The topics were as follows:

1. *Drivers should be banned from using their cell phones while driving cars. To what extent do you agree or disagree?*
2. *Parents should control what their children watch on TV. To what extent do you agree or disagree?*

Results

This section presents the results of the current study with the discussion of these results based on the errors taxonomy adopted from James'1998 and Al-Shormani & Al-Sohbani's 2012. The results were as follows:

Table1. *Semantic errors in the written essays*

Category	No. (%)	Total No. (%)
I. Formal misselection		11 (3.02%)
(1) Misselection of a Prefix	0	
(2)Misselection of a Suffix	11(3.02%)	
II. Formal Misformation		170 (46.7%)
(1) Direct Translation from L1	52 (14.2%)	
(2) Borrowing	0	52 (14.2% %)
(3) Coinage	0	
(4) Distortion due to spelling		
(4.1)Omission of letters	42 (11.5%)	118 (32.4%)
(4.2) Misordering of letters	8 (2.19%)	
(4.3) Overinclusion of letters	18(4.9%)	
(4.4) L1-Based Spelling Errors	6 (1.6%)	
(4.5) Misselection of letters	44(12.08%)	
III. Lexical choice		148 (40.6%)
(1) Assumed synonymy	50(13.7%)	
(2) Derivativeness	0	
(3) Confusion of binary terms	17(4.6%)	
(4) Paraphrase	42 (11.5%)	
(5) Idiomacity	31(8.5%)	
(6) Similar forms	8 (2.1%)	
IV. Collocation		26 7.1%)
(1) Collocation choice		
(1.1)One collocation incorrect	9(2.4%)	
(1.2) Both collocation incorrect	2(0.52%)	
(2) Contextualization	0	
(3) Wrong forms	15(4.1%)	
V. Lexicogrammatical choice		9 (2.4%)
(1) Adjectives in place of nouns	2 (0.52%)	
(2) Nouns in place of adjectives	5 (1.3%)	
(3) Adjectives in place of adverbs	2 (0.52%)	
(4) Adverbs in place of adjectives	0	
Total	364	100%

Table1 shows that altogether 364 semantic errors have been identified in this study. These errors were classified into four categories namely, formal misformation (46.7%), distortiondue to spelling (32.4%), lexical choice (40.6%) and lexicogrammatical choice (2.4%). The results show that direct translation from L1, assumed synonym and misselection of letters sub-categories score the highest number of the errors, i.e.14.2%, 13.08% and 12.08% respectively, while the sub-category, both collocations incorrect error was the lowest (0.52%). The other errors take the form of paraphrase which accounted for 11.5 % and idiomacity accounted for 8.5%. Details of these finding is discussed in the next section.

Discussion
I. Formal misselection

According to James (1998), formal misselection consists of three subcategories namely, misselection of a prefix, misselection of a suffix, and false friends. Based on the analysis of data, no errors match these two subcategories; misselection prefix, and false friends. However, errors on misselection of a suffix are available.

2. Misselection of a Suffix

According to Free Online Dictionary, suffix can carry grammatical information (inflectional suffixes) or lexical suffixes (derivational /lexical suffixes). It is stated that inflectional suffixes do not change the word class of the word such as adding 's' third person singular present, 'ed' past tense and 'ing' progressive (Jackson & Amvela, 2000). It seems that Libyan EFL learners face some difficulties in terms of forming words by adding suffixes. This category comprises 4 errors. The following examples highlight these errors:

1.* ………to increase the knowledge and referashing the thinkfull [thinking]
2.*……….relax and doing something interested. [interesting]
3. *……….our children have to watched. [watch]
4. *……… the idea that say. [says]
5. *……… everyone should do not using phone [use]

In example (1), the learner adds the suffix *'full'* to the word *think* which is nonsense as the term does not exist in English. Instead the suffix meant by the respondent was '*ing*' to form the word 'thinking'. It is obvious here that how the deviation occurred by choosing the wrong suffix which impacts the understanding of the sentence and impedes the message conveyed by the writer.

In (2) the learner committed a common mistake. He/she encountered the difficulty of distinguishing between *"interested"* which used to describe the feeling of the people where as 'interesting' is used to denote places and objects (Quirk et al., 1985). In line with this, Al-Shormani & Al-Sohbani (2012) mentioned in their study that the subjects committed some errors regarding the disability to distinguish between the suffixes *'ing'* and *'ed'*. They elaborated by

giving the following examples: "*The book was writing by Shakespeare or I am visited my friends tomorrow*".

In (3) and (4), the student used the verb *"watched"* and "say" as a substitute for *"watch"* and *"says"* respectively.

In example (5), the subject committed an error which lies in using the word *'using'* instead of *'use'*. It is believed that in Arabic, this is not an error because formation of words in Arabic is completely different from English. Thus, these errors might be attributed to the lack of knowledge of L2 and they called it developmental of overgeneralization errors (Al-Shormani & Al-Sohbani, 2012).

II. Formal Misformation

Formal misformation errors was defined by James (1998) as vocabulary produced by the learners in their written production but these words are not existent in the L2. The source of these errors can be the L1 or the L2 itself. The formal misformation errors found in this research are classified into three types which are direct translation form L1, borrowing, and coinage.

1. Direct translation from L1

These errors occurred when the EFL learners translate the words, phrases, clauses and/or sentences from their L1 (Arabic) into English. There are 52 occurrences which represent 14.2% of errors committed by the participants. The following are some of the excerpts.

1. * After we <u>cuttingdistance</u> a 300 kilometers.[travel]
2. *they<u>forget thinking about</u> what their children need. [neglect]
3.   *we saw camels <u>cut</u> of the road. [cross]
4.*…..help the kids for study; speak, if they watch <u>small</u> or <u>young</u> time. [early childhood].
5.*There are programs contain bad <u>habits.</u> [behaviors]
6.*<u>I mean by that</u>, sometimes bad friends may give some ideas and names of bad channels or <u>sites</u>. [I think] [websites]
7.* Although it had advantages <u>same</u>, it helps kids to learn….. [Such as]

In excerpts from (1) to (7), the learners used *cutting*, *forget thinking, cut*, *small/young, habits, mean, sites and same* for, *travel*, *neglect*, *cross*, *early childhood*, *behaviours, think, websites* and *such as*. These words are directly translated from the learners' L1.They are used instead of other English words. This strategy is followed by Arab learners due to the lack of L2 knowledge and vocabulary. Thus, the students set up a sentence in Arabic, translate them and transfer them into English (Al-shormani & Al-Sohbani, 2012). All of these errors are assumed to be committed due to the effect of L1, namely interlingual errors.

2. Borrowing

Borrowing words from the L1 is one approach that a leaner uses when she/he does not have the ability of using the L2 equivalent (Al-Shormani & Al-Sohbani, 2012). In this study, there were 3 borrowed terms which are as follows:

1.*Prayer and fasting andTaraweehwas beautiful and happy times.

2.*The most beautiful and most important event in my life when I went to Umarhin Ramadan

In examples (1) and (2), words used are not from English. The first is *Taraweeh*means night prayers. It seems that the learner used the word *Taraweeh* thinking that it can be understood by all readers supposing that she/he shares the same writer's culture. In (2) the writer used the terms *Umarh (Umrah)*which means visiting the sacred house of Allah, and *Ramadan*, the ninth month in the Islamic calendar. Apart from borrowing the L1 words, this category shows the cultural items used and its effect in conveying the meaning which need more explanation to be understandable to the reader of the different culture.

3. Coinage

The result of the current study shows no examples match with this subcategory. Coinage errors occurred when the learners attempted to apply the Arabic rule to make up a new form or word in English (Al-shormani & Al-Sohbani, 2012).

4. Distortion due to spelling

It is obvious that when words are spelled wrongly their meaning will be a bit difficult to grasp. The distortion due to spelling in this study was classified into omission of letters, misordering of letters, L1-based spelling errors and misselection of letters. They will be presented and discussed as follows:

1). Omissions of letters

1. *We are luky that day

2. * watching television or movies exessively .

3. *Morover, one of the many reports showed
4.* enhance our children converstion.
a5.*To know more what happed in the word.
*6** Nowdays ,The technology is inside every home.

In excerpts from (1) to (6) there is an omission of one letter from each word. They vary between consonant and vowel letters. In (1) the word *luky* is written without *e*. In (2) and (3) the letter *c* and *e* is omitted from the words *excessively* and *moreover* respectively. Whereas the words *conversation, happened, world* and *nowadays* are written incorrectly as the learners omitted one letter from each word which consequently make them semantically deviant. All of these spelling mistakes are caused by insufficient knowledge about the L2 spelling. In addition, Arabic and English are completely different in terms of scripts.

2). Misordering of letters
There are two examples of misordering of letters which are as follows:

1.* but <u>sometiems</u> there are some news
2* essential for our <u>dialy</u> life dealing
3* they like <u>miove</u> more than study
4*The children spend his time during holiday and <u>liesure</u> time.
5 *and saw a lot of <u>beuatiful</u> places.

In these sentences, the learners committed the errors in spelling of the words *sometimes*, *daily*, *movies*, *leisure* and *beautiful*. They spelt the words wrongly which is believed to be ascribed to L2.

3). Overinclusion of letters
Overinclusion of letters are believed to be committed by Arab EFL learners at the beginning and advanced levels. These errors occur due to overgeneralization of L2 rules (Al-shormani & Al-Sohbani, 2012). The following examples illustrate these errors which can be classified under this subcategory.

1* they know what <u>childreen</u> watch.
2*if that could be done under <u>parantscontroll.</u>
3* understand any worde their parents told.
4* which <u>harms</u> our childrens<u>development.</u>
5*<u>Driviing</u> and use of mobile.

It is argued that Arabic has no influence on the errors committed under this subcategory namely overinclusion. In errors such as *driviing*, the learner added 'i' which indicates the lack of awareness of English spelling rule in terms of adding -ing suffix. The same goes to these words; *childreen, contoll, worde* and *childrens*. In these errors, the learners added a letter to each word due to the lack of knowledge of L2 and overgeneralization.

4). L1-based spelling errors
The following examples are found to be L1-based errors:

1.* Nowadays most of <u>peoble</u> use their cell phones
2.* our boints of view
3.* to <u>leaf</u> the children to watch TV

The words *peoble*(1) and *boints*(2) are misspelt by substitute the letter b for /p/. Needless to say that most of Arab students pronounce the */p/* as */b/*. In (4) the respondent faced difficulty in choosing the right letter *'v'* as s/he used the 'f' instead. This is in agreement with Al-shormani & Al-Sohbani (2012) that stated that Arabic speakers encounter difficulties of distinguishing between *'b'* and *'p'* as well *'f'* and *'v'* due to the wrong pronunciation of *'p'* and *'v'* as *'b'* and *'f'* respectively.

5). Misselection of letters
This category has the high number of errors (44 errors). The following are some examples of these mistakes:

1.* we are silent up to 10 <u>minetues</u> [minutes]
2.*Programs that made the children <u>lasy,</u> loss activity……..and<u>enmoy</u> to his friends

[lazy]   [enemy]
2.* We scared <u>from</u> the <u>accedent</u>   [accident]
3.*<u>Becouse</u> children spend more time in the house <u>rother</u> than out of house. [because]
[rather]
4.* The <u>parant</u> should take care about … [parent]
5.* who <u>addicated</u> to TV …. [addicted]

In sentences (1) through (5), the words *minetues, lasy, enmoy, accident, because, rotherparants* and *addicated*are wrongly spelt. The misselection of letters were committed due to the inability of the learners to spell the words well. To trace the reason behind these errors, L2 influence appears to be responsible as Arabic does not have the same orthography.

II. **Lexical Choices**

Choosing the right lexis is an important factor in conveying the intended meaning. It is believed that in acquiring a L2, lexical knowledge plays a vital role in obtaining that language. To ease the process of SLA the learner should have sufficient lexical knowledge of the target language (Al-Jarf, 2011). Libyan learners encounter some difficulties in learning English lexicon and there is a trend that they commit some semantic errors due to lexical choices and cultural items. These errors are classified as follows.

1). **Assumed synonymy**

It has been argued that synonym is a lexical phenomenon and it can be found in any language (Shormani, 2014). Abu Naba'h (2011) contends that in semantic, it is impossible to find two synonyms or two sentences that have exactly the same meaning. Thus EFL Arab learners assume some words as synonyms and use them interchangeably which results in some semantic errors and misconception. The following are examples from this study.

1.* who are very busy in their <u>works</u>. [jobs]
2.*television has <u>meaningful</u>programms. [informative]
3.* He may <u>forget</u> the exit and go forward instead of turn on <u>correct</u> exit. [missed] [right]
4.* One of the cell phones <u>flaws</u>.   [limitations]
5.*He is frendly, <u>funny</u>… [Sense of humour]
6.*Follow wrong <u>practices</u> that displayed in movies and series… [behaviours]

The underlined words were used by the learners as assumed synonyms of the words stated in [ ]. In sentence (1) the learner used the word <u>works</u> instead of *jobs* which is believed to be interlingual error as these two English words are equivalent to the word *amail*in Arabic. This also can be confirmed from the plural form of work *amail* which is singular in English. Words used in (2), (3) and (4) are <u>meaningful, forget, correct</u> and <u>flaws</u> reflect the confused choice of these synonyms as they cannot convey the intended meaning. In example (5) the error is also ascribed to the L1 of Arab learners as the term <u>funny</u> is used in Arabic with meaning of "has a sense of humour". But this error also can be attributed to L2. It is obvious that the lack of knowledge of L2 for an appropriate word for "sense of humour" lead the learner to use the word <u>funny</u> which might mislead the reader in this context. The error in (6) can be ascribed to L1

because the term practicesconvey the meaning of *behaviours*in Arabic. Thus, the learner used the term practice as a synonym for *behaviour* in trying to provide its meaning in his/her L1.

2). Derivativeness

There is an essential difference between Arabic and English in terms of derivation. According to Al-Jarf (1994:11) "Arabic and English do not share any derivational affixes (equivalent forms). They do not share any suffixes and prefixes that show common origin and meaning". Furthermore, Arabic words are built-up from roots representing lexical and semantic connecting elements. This is not the case with English, which employs the stem as a basis for word generation". However, in this study, no error is committed for this category.

3). Confusion of binary terms

According to this category learners may get confused in selecting the appropriate word due to the "kind of exclusiveness", which means that when one word is used, the other one is not (Shormani, 2014). The following examples present this error.

1.* but also to the other traffic users too. [road users]
2.*Also we can't avoid the children to watch TV at all. [protect /prevent]
3. ……to divide their children time in good way. [to manage]
4.* Children like to follow what they see. [imitate]
5.*And join them to many programmes or activities.   [monitor]
6. *TV is sometimes possible to offer things or programmes which may cluttered their thoughts. [show/display]
7.* Confiscating the driving licence. [revoking]

Errors in this category are caused by confusion between the binary terms used by the learners. For instance, respondent no. 29 committed an error by using the term *traffic users* to mean *road users* which is believed to be due to interlingual reason as the two words carry the same meaning in Arabic. The error in (2) comes from choosing the term *avoid* instead of *protect* or *prevent*. The other substitutes are (3) *divide* for *manage*, (4) *follow* for *imitate,* (5) *join* for *monitor*, and (6) *offer* for *show* or *display* respectively. In (2) the word *avoid* is used as L1-influnece, because in Arabic it can be used to mean "protect others from doing things". For the error in (4) and (5), the learner used the terms *follow*for *imitate* and *join* to substitute *monitor*. In these sentences, the learner might fail in conveying the intended meaning. This error is ascribed to L2-influence as the word *join* cannot be used in Arabic with this meaning. (6) and (7) can be attributed to L1-effect as the word *offer*is used in Arabic with the sense of *display*. The same applies to *confiscating* which reflects the meaning of *revoking*.

4). Paraphrase

Al-shormani & Al-Sohbani (2012) mention that Zughoul (1991) calls paraphrase errors as "circumlocution". They further contented that paraphrase is considered as the most problematic area that Arab learners encountered. These errors are exemplified as follows:

1.* the drivers cannot see the people walking in the road. [pedestrians]
2. This number each year increase about one percent from each year. [increase yearly]
3.* Or help me in my live although he isn't learn any language or words, or litters in alphapets Arabic language.   [illiterate]

4.*Programs that made the children lasy, loss activity.   [lazy/ unenergetic]
5.*cause me headache a long time. [annoyed me]

It seems that when learners lack the knowledge of knowing the appropriate terms to express his/her ideas in L2, they tend to use the strategy of compensation by using paraphrasing. Thus, instead of choosing the vocabulary *pedestrians* s/he keeps on elaborating which might impede the reader from grasping the intended meaning. Sentence (2) also shows this type of error as redundancy is quite obvious. In (3) the learner does not know the word *illiterate*, so s/he tried to paraphrase it by using isn't learn any language or words. In the next sentence (4) the term loss activity was used to substitute*unenergetic*. In (5) the learner used *cause me headache*in order to express his/her feeling and it will be more appropriate if s/he describes the situation by using terms such as *annoy, disturb*or *irritate* .

5). Idiomacity

Al-shormani & Al-Sohbani (2012) argue that L2 learners in general and Arab learners in particular face difficulties in learning English idioms due to their difficulty in understanding the meaning in context. Here are some errors:

1.*. He using phone and driving in the same time. [at the same time]
2.* In my idea using phone while driving is bad habit. [in my opinion]
3.* we are look for each other. [Look at]
 4.*As you know there is many programs in the TV... [on the TV]
5.* I actually do not agree to the use of mobile. [agree with]

As the learner does not know about idiomatic structures in L2, s/he seems to be struggling in producing the correct idiom as it should have been known in advance. For instance, the first idiom is wrongly written as *in the same time*which should be correctly written *at the same time*. In the second idiom (2), the learner comes up with a completely strange one which might be attributed to the influence of L1. The respondent here used the term *in my idea*to mean *in my opinion*. In (3), *look for*s used as a substitute for *look at* which has a different meaning. In the example (4), s/he wrongly used the phrase *inthe TV*instead of *on the TV*. This error can be rooted from the L1 as this proposition *"fi"* is used in Arabic. In the error (5) the student used *"agree to"* to express his/her agreement but s/he missed the right term which is *"agree with"*. The error is attributed to L2 source as Arabic does not have this form. Moreover, this idiom is identical in both Arabic and English, i.e. the verb *agree* collocates *with* the word 'with'.

6). Similar forms

Similar forms have been considered by many researchers as a cause of lexical choice errors committed by L2 learners irrespective of their L1 (Zughoul, 1991; Shalaby et al., 2007; Llach, 2005; Hemchua & Schmitt, 2006). In the current study, this category includes 8 errors. These are some examples:

1.*unlessparants they know what childreen watch. [at least].
2.*As you know their is many programs. [there]
3.*I also see a lot these days how children effect on each other [affect]
4.*That is way I am disagree for the idea …..[Why]
5.* almost of them are not subject to censorship. [Most]

Errors in this subcategory were caused by confusion due to the similarities between the words. These similarities could be either graphically or phonetically (Shormani, 2014).   In excerpts from (1) into (5), the confused words used are *unless, their, effect* (n), *way* and *almost* instead of *atleast, there, affect*(v), *why and most*respectively. All of these errors seemed to be caused by insufficient knowledge of L2.

IV. Collocation

Collocations are an important part of any language and their meanings are considered to be more important especially when they are used by non-native learners. According to Rabeh (2010) "a collocation is the combination of two words or more creating a meaning which is different from the meaning of separate words"(p.23). Few collocation errors have been identified in this study due to the difficulty that students face in terms of constructing them in L2. The following are some examples:

1). Collocation choice
 This category was divided into two subcategories which are as follows:

1.1 One collocation incorrect
In the following excerpts the learners failed to choose one part of the collocations:
> 1. * waste time, <u>or do eccident</u>. [have]
> 2. * we will <u>makeresk</u>.[take]
> 3. *It is very important for children to <u>have advice</u> about which channels.
>   [To be given]

In these examples from (1) to (3), one collocate is incorrect. For instance in sentence (1), the participant wrote   *do accident*instead of *have/has accident*. This error seems to be due to the lack of knowledge of this structure in L2. In the second sentence (2), the learner committed an error in choosing the verb *take* to express the meaning of exposing to risk. So the correct collocation should be *take risk*. It is obvious that the cause of this error is the interference of L1 as the term *make risk*is used in Arabic. In (3) *be given advice* should be used rather than *have advice* which cannot convey the meaning clearly. This error can be traced to the incompetency of the learner in using the L2.

1.2 Both collocations incorrect
Unlike the former subcategory, in this one both parts of the collocation are wrong. Examples are as follows:
> 1. * <u>putting</u> the vehicle over. [stop]
> 2.*Programmes are good for them to <u>build their minds</u> in <u>right infrastructure</u>.
>   [develop their thinking / good way]

In example (1), it seems that the learner tried to use a wrong combination of words which are *put the vehicle over*to convey the meaning of stopping the car and make a call while you are driving. Thus, using this collocation hinder the meaning and make it very difficult to be grasped. The error in example (2) includes both words as well. The collocation used is incorrect. So, based on the analysis of the first author who shares the same L1 with the participants, it is

understood that the participant intended to say that these programmes can be used to develop kids' mind set by using appropriate method. It is believed that this error is caused by the influence of L1 as the writer thinks in Arabic but write in English.

2). Contextualization
The focus in this subcategory is on the context that the word is used. Here is one error from this study:
1. *The TV is one of the most <u>important things</u> [devices /issues]
In sentence (1) the word *things* seems to have nothing wrong in terms of grammar and semantic but the terms such as *devices* and *issues* might be more specific in this context.

3). Wrong forms
The following examples exemplify this category.
>   1. * everyone should do not <u>using</u> phone [use]
>   2.* is not good for children to <u>watched</u>. [watch]
>   3.*scientest programs that children can benefit from. [scientific]
>   4.* the machines that at first were used only to <u>making</u> call. [make]

In (3) and (2), the respondents failed to come up with the correct form of the word. They used the words *using* and *watched* with the wrong suffixes which make the meaning quite vague. Although the respondent omitted a spelling mistake in sentence (3) *scientist*, it is obvious that he/she intended to use the word *scientist* which is grammatically wrong as the correct form should be *scientific*programs. This error is ascribed to the learner's confusion in choosing the right word to construct the collocation.

VI. Lexicogrammatical choice
Lexicogrammatical choice errors occur when the learners substitute a word from a particular grammatical category with another grammatical category (Al-shormani & Al-Sohbani 2012). Thus, she/he, for instance, uses an adjective instead of a noun or vice versa. The Lexicogrammatical errors identified in this study are as follows:

1). Adjectives in place of nouns
In this category, errors are committed by using adjectives in the place of nouns. Two errors have been identified which are as follows:
>   1.* There are some dangerous and problems. [danger]
>   2.* …..to increase the knowledge and referashing the <u>thinkfull</u> … [thinking]

In example (1), it is obvious that the student used the word *dangerous*, which is an adjective, to substitute the noun *danger*. The context here needed to be expressed by using the noun instead of the adjective. It is believed that this error was committed due to the lack of knowledge of the grammatical rules of target language. In sentence (2), the learner used the wrong word *thinkfull* with the suffix *full*, which gives the sense that the word is an adjective. It seems that the term thinking (mind set) is meant here but the student failed twice in this example. Firstly, to choose the right adjective and secondly, to attempt to use an adjective in the place of a noun. This error is L2-based error as the learner is not aware of the right word to be used in this context.

2). Nouns in place of adjectives
Errors in this category are committed when the learners use nouns in the place of adjectives. These errors scores 1.3 %. They are exemplified as follows:

> 1.*could be done under parants control [parental].
> 2.*In addition there is many educational and scientest programs. [scientist]
> *3.* driving is very dangers. [Dangerous]
> 4.* The watch tv is fun for kids and adults. [funny/entertaining]

> The error in (1) occurred because the noun *parants*[parents] is used instead of the adjective parental and the same happened with (2) as*scientest* [scientist] substitutes scientific (adj), (3), *dangers*instead of *dangerous* and (4), *fun*for *funny* or *entertaining*. Here insufficient L2 knowledge seems to be the cause of these errors.

3). Adjectives in place of adverbs
According to Al-shormani and Al-Sohbani (2012), it is common for Arab learners to commit this type of error, where they replace adverbs with adjective. The following errors are examples of this subcategory:

> 1. *I ……..feel good every day. [well]
> 2. * TV is sometimes possible to offer things. [possibly] Underline the error. Add the correct word.

*The words in bold should not be in italics. Change them. Copy correctly.

 In sentence (1), the learner used an adjective*good* instead of an adverb *well* as it describes the feeling of the writer. In example (2), *possible* is used wrongly as the right vocabulary should be the adverb *possibly*. These errors are attributed to L2 as the learners lack   proficiency in grammatical structures of English.

4) Adverbs in place of adjectives
Although the belief that most Arab students encounter some difficulties in substituting adverbs with adjectives, no example matches this category in the current study.Al-shormani and Al-Sohbani (2012) state thatArab learners encounter some difficulties in using adverbs in their written products .Thus, it could be that the respondents, in the current study, used the strategy of avoidance. Due to the difficulty of distinguishing between adverbs and adjectives they preferred to avoid using these structures to spare any errors to be committed.

Conclusions
> In this study, semantic errors committed by Libyan postgraduate learners have been traced. These errors are classified according to three categories namely, lexical, collocational and lexicogrammatical. Each of these categories has been divided into further subcategories. There are 364 errors identified in the current study. The results showed that Direct Translation from L1, Assumed Synonym and Misselection of Letters sub-categories score the highest number oferrors, i.e.14.2%, 13.08% and 12.08% respectively, While the sub-category, both collocation incorrect error was the lowest, 0.52%. The other errors take the form of paraphrase which accounted for 11.5 % and Idiomacity accounted for 8.5%. Two main sources have been found to be the cause behind these errors namely, L1 influence and insufficient knowledge about the L2.

Pedagogical implication

This study recommends that English teachers and curriculum designers should focus on these semantic errors especially the categories identified in order to address the influence of L1 transfer (Arabic) and linguistic interference on the English writing of EFL Libyan students. Teachers, in particular, should concentrate on these difficulties faced by EFL learners and encourage them to use accurate vocabulary with the exact meaning intended to convey the message to the reader. In addition, comparing between Arabic and English might be applicable to show students the differences between L1 and L2 which might lead to some errors and consequently communication breakdown.

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