The Acquisition of Do-Support in Negation and Interrogatives by Adult Arab Learners of English: A preliminary study

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Abstract
This preliminary study investigates the acquisition of do-support in negation and interrogatives by adult Arab learners of English. The main question is to identify how Arabic language influences the acquisition of do-support. The influence of L2 proficiency level in the acquisition of do-support is also addressed. The study is conducted within the perspective of Full Transfer/Full Access Hypothesis and Differential Markedness Hypothesis. Do-support as a marked feature of English has received little or no attention in previous work on the acquisition of English as a second language by adult Arab learners. This study seeks to fill that gap by documenting the acquisition of do-support in negation and interrogatives. To address these aims, a written production task, a multiple-choice task and a semi-structured interview were administered to 10 adult Arab learners of low and advanced English proficiency levels. The findings indicate that the role of Arabic is noted. While not the source of errors, it acts as a strategy that adult Arab learners use to dealing with limited L2 knowledge and the markedness of do-support, which is the main source of difficulty shown by adult Arab learners. The role of learners' L1 is selective according to the learners' perception of what is difficult or not. Moreover, a significant relationship was found between L2 proficiency level and the mastery of do-support in that high- proficiency learners outperform low-proficiency learners. It is recommended that future research examine the acquisition and markedness of do-support in the interlanguage of Arabic-speaking children.
Key words: Arabic influence, do-support, L2 proficiency level, markedness