

Syntactic Errors in an Arab EFL Postgraduate Student's Spoken English during a Thesis Supervision Session

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Abstract

This study investigates the syntactic errors in speaking among an Arab L2 post-graduate student in an academic speaking context. Specifically, the objectives are to describe the syntax error patterns committed by the student while engaging in speaking and to explore the contributing factors that may affect the errors. To address these objectives, a qualitative research method is employed. Data was collected through audio-tape recordings and a face-to-face interview with the participant. The recorded data was transcribed and coded based on Noor Hashim's (1996) seven categories of errors. The findings indicate that some of the first language (L1) negative transfer errors fall into five out of seven categories of Noor Hashim's classification; however, new categories are discovered, such as wrong verb choice, noun forms, overly restricted use of pronouns, and omission of necessary complementizers. These errors can be explained by interference from the L1 and another contributing factor is the limited use of some strategies, such as repetition and confirmation. The significance of this study is a direct pedagogical implication to expose post-graduate students to academic spoken English. This is to avoid miscommunication between students and their academic supervisors. It is recommended that future research examine new teaching and learning techniques of academic spoken English to be incorporated into the classrooms.

Keywords: Academic conversation, Arab L2 speakers, L1 interference, syntactic errors, thesis supervision

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