

# THE INFLUENCE OF COLLOQUIAL JORDANIAN ARABIC UPON LEARNING ENGLISH NEGATION BY JORDANIAN EFL SCHOOL STUDENTS

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## ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to investigate the influence of colloquial Jordanian Arabic upon the learning of English negation by Jordanian school students. It also aimed at examining the effect of students' gender on transfer errors as a result of CJA. The sample of the study consisted of 100 male and female students in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. During the academic year 2009/2010, students were randomly selected from the public schools in Al-Mazar Directorate of Education/Jordan. A translation test was constructed to arrive at the objectives of this study.

The study concluded that students committed more transfer errors in their use of English negation than other types of errors in the same syntactic area as a result of the influence of CJA. This study also showed that males committed more transfer errors than females.

**Key words:** CJA, EFL school students, MSA, NSA.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to cast light on linguistic interference associated with English negation committed by Jordanian schoolboys and schoolgirls. In this sense, it attempts to analyze their errors committed, putting in place two questions. Since research on such a topic was not given the attention that it deserved, writing about the influence of colloquial Jordanian Arabic upon the learning of English negation by Jordanian school students is a fertile area to write an article about.

Like other students from different backgrounds, Jordanian students who learn English as a foreign language face difficulty in learning different aspects of the English language, especially in syntax. One of these areas where students face difficulty is the English negation. It is noteworthy mentioning that Jordanian school students make many basic errors in negation in spite of the fact that they start to learn English from the first grade up to the secondary stage.

Although the structure of negation in English is totally different from that found in CJA, the researchers believes that many errors committed by Jordanian students can be basically attributed to the influence of (CJA). Therefore, it is highly important to shed the light on the basic differences between the structure of negation in English and CJA briefly. After studying carefully the studies and the grammar books on the structure of negation in both languages Colloquial Arabic and English (Al-wer (1985), Celci-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1983), Eastwood (1992), and Hagemen and Gueron (1999). The researcher has come up with the following differences:

In CJA, the negative particle is placed either before the verb or in the beginning of the sentence. For example: (Sami kasar l-bbab). This sentence can be either negated as (Sami maa kasar l-bbab) or (maa kasar l ilbaab Sami). Regarding the negative particles in CJA Al-wer (1985) states that there are three main negative particles : maa, laa, miš. In English the negative particle is placed before the main verb and thus it is a preverbal negation and the sentence can not begin with the negative particle. Moreover, In English the negative particle used with the do-insertion, changes the verb form into bare form .On the other hand, in Colloquial Arabic the negative particles do not change the form of the verb . For instance: Zayad jaab ?l-kittab ames ( Zayad brought the book yesterday) is negated into Colloquial Arabic as Zayad maa jaab ?l-kittab ames. (zayad didn't bring the book yesterday).

Hashim (1996) has revised the most of the studies investigating the syntactic errors made by Arabic – speaking students in learning English. The findings reveal that the influence of native language (mother tongue) has been found the most common source of such syntactic errors. The errors have been presented into seven syntactic categories: verbal, sentence structure, relative clause, adverbial clause, conjunction, articles and prepositions.

Ellis (1997) states that L1 transfer refers to the influence of the learner's first language on the acquisition of L2. This effect is obvious in four ways. First, the learner's first language is a source of errors in language learner. Second, the learner's first language can facilitate second language learning which Ellis (1985) referred to as negative and positive transfer respectively. Third, L1 language transfer can result in avoidance strategy. Fourth, L1` transfer can result in the overuse of some forms.

Mahmoud (2000) mentions that Arab learners who are learning English as a foreign language where they are not exposed too much to the target language, depend heavily on the interlingual transfer strategy to solve the difficulties they face in their learning of English. He adds that" Arabic Speaking students of English transfer from both MSA as well as NSA depending on the distance between these varieties and English".

### 1.1. Research Questions

This study tries to answer the following questions:

1. Do students commit more transfer errors in their use of English negation than other types of errors due to the effect of CJA?

2. To what extent are transfer errors made by male and female students different?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite the fact that several researchers have investigated the effect of Arabic on learning different aspects of the English Syntax, there have been few studies at the level of negation.

Al-Haq (1982) investigated the syntactical errors in compositions written by 96 secondary cycle male and female students in urban and rural schools. He showed that there were no significant differences between male and female with respect to noun-phrase and verb-phrase errors, except for prepositions, particles and tense. There were significant differences between urban and rural students with respect to the definite article, prepositions and particles. He ascribed these errors to mother tongue interference, overgeneralization, performance, ignorance of rules usage, restriction, formation and developmental errors.

Tahineh (2008) investigated the kind of errors that the Jordanian university students made in the use of English prepositions. Data was taken from free compositions written by 162 students with similar educational, linguistic, and sociolinguistic background. The study revealed that MTI is the major source of Jordanian EFL learners' errors and transfer strategies of TL constituted a major part of the errors.

Al-Naimi (1989) conducted a study concerned with the errors committed by Arab EFL learners of English Adjectives. It was found that interference accounts for the wide range of errors in adjective formation, selection and comparison. The Sample consisted of 150 students enrolled in the classes of the Orientation Program of the language Centre.

Hazaymeh (1994) conducted a study to investigate the second secondary students' errors in learning English verb tenses. The sample of the study comprised (587) students from public schools and (172) students from private schools. Both male and female students were involved in his study. Students were selected randomly from secondary schools in the city of Irbid/ Jordan. He found that there were statistical significant differences between public and private students, male and female students, scientific and literary students with respect to their errors in using the English verb tenses. The researcher attributed the errors made by the students undertaken in his study to the following reasons: mother tongue interference, overgeneralization, the complexity of the structures of the English verb tenses, a strategy of parallel structure, and ignorance of grammatical rules.

Miqdadi (1997) investigated the effect of Arabic on Learning English relative clauses. He found that the effect of negative transfer from Arabic into English regarding the errors committed by the students in the formation of the English relative clauses was so clear. The sample of the study consisted of 100 female and male first and second year students at the English Department of Yarmouk University.

## 3. METHOD

### 3.1 Sample of the Study:

The sample of the study comprised 100 male and female ninth grade students in school of Al-Mazar Directorate of Education during the academic year 2009/2010. All the subjects have been learning English as a foreign language for nine years. Females and males were equally in number.

### 3.2 Instrument of the study

A translation test was constructed as a major instrument to achieve the goals of this study (appendix 1). The test consists of fifteen sentences written in colloquial Jordanian Arabic. Students were asked to translate these sentences into English. All of the sentences are negative ones. The duration of the test was an hour and they were allowed to ask about the meanings of unfamiliar words.

### 3.3 Validity and reliability of the instrument:

To establish the content validity of the test, the method of trustee's validity was employed. The test was given to a jury of ten academics, four of whom are professors of English, two professors of Arabic, two English supervisors, and two experienced teachers of English. They were requested to ensure the appropriateness of the items for this study, plus the clarity and linguistic correctness of each item. They were also requested to suggest any modification. The test was modified with the jury's comments and recommendations by reconstruction, deletion and addition of some items.

### 3.4 Data collection:

During the second semester of the academic year 2009/2010, the researcher visited all the selected schools for the study and the directions of the task in hand were explained fully and clearly to make sure that everyone understands the nature of the task in hand and what is required. Then, the researcher read each response carefully. Only negation errors were identified while other types of errors such as spelling, for example, were neglected. Negation errors were classified into four types as the following:

1- Wrong use of the negative mark: errors committed when students misuse the negative particle as a result of making confusion between plural and singular subjects in one hand and between past and present tenses in the other hand.

2-Double negation: errors committed when students use two negative particles in the same sentence.

3-Transfer errors: errors omitted when students depend on their native language to translate the English sentences.

4-The wrong use of two auxiliaries: errors committed when participants wrongly use two auxiliaries in the sentence and incorrectly negate one of them.

Errors of each type were listed in separate lists and counted according to the gender variable.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### 4.1. The findings related to the first Question:

The first question in this study was: Do students commit more transfer errors in their use of the negation than other types of errors due to the effect of CJA?

**Table 1.** Frequency and percentage of Each Error Type in the Translation Test

Error type	Frequency	Percentage
1) Transfer Errors	241	42.7
2) Double negation	161	28.5
3) The wrong use of auxiliary	97	17.1
4) The wrong use of two auxiliaries	65	11.7

Table 1 shows that negation errors were highly concentrated in transfer errors. The percentage of Transfer errors was 42.7%. The percentage of the other three types of errors was as follows: 11.7% for the wrong use of two auxiliaries, 17.1% for the wrong use of the negative mark, and 28.7% for the double negation.

The percentage of the transfer errors was the greatest because the students tend to rely heavily on their native language in translating the equivalent Arabic sentences into English. The following are illustrative examples:

- 1) \*I have no money enough.
- 2) \*The weather not cold today.
- 3) \*Ahmad no knows thing about the accident.
- 4) \*not drink the dirty water.

In the above sentences the learners' native language impact is very obvious. The use of the negation structure found in CJA causing these errors. This transfer took place in form of literal translation since the sentence can't begin with the negative particle in English where the negative particles in CJA can be either placed in the beginning of the sentence or before the verb. For instance: (not drink the dirty water). This sentence is literally translated into English. We can also conclude that the students errors which attributed to the influence of CJA upon learning English negation has basically taken the following form: (no or not +verb / adjective / noun) . The participants kept using no or not as a negative particle to negate the sentences ignoring the fact that the structure of the English negation is totally different from that used in Arabic. Therefore, we conclude that students relied heavily on their native language structure in translating the sentences into English.

Other types of errors were mostly concentrated in the use of the double negation. As it has been mentioned previously that the percentage of such errors was 28.7%. The following are illustrative examples:

- 5) I have not never seen the elephant
- 6) Neither Sami nor his brother does not like drinking coffee.
- 7) no one did not bring his English book yesterday

Considering carefully the students' answers of translating the equivalent sentences number 5, 3and, 6. We see that in each sentence student used the double negation. In ( 5) both the negative mark never and not are used, in ( 6) neither and not are used and in ( 7) no and not are used. Such errors are not attributed to the effect of the mother tongue. I think that such errors are committed as a result of the complexity of the structures of the English negation and misunderstanding them.

The third type of errors, the wrong use of auxiliary, constituted 17.1% of all other type of errors. The following are examples of students' wrong answers:

- 8) My father was not very tired
- 9) Ali doesn't send the letter yesterday
- 10) Salem didn't visit the zoo next week.

Studying carefully the students' answers of translating the equivalent Arabic sentences number 8,14, and 13. It is very clear that students used the wrong auxiliary in each sentence. In (8) was not is used instead of is not; in (9) does not is used instead of did not; in (10) did not is used instead won't . Such errors are attributed to the wrong teaching methods and lack of knowledge on the use of negative and their agreement with subject and the time reference.

The fourth type of errors, wrong use of two auxiliaries, constituted 11.7% of all other types of errors. The following are illustrative examples:

- 11) Hamdan didn't can express himself easily.
- 12) I didn't have seen the elephant.

From my point of view, these errors are committed as a result of ignorance the grammatical rules of negation in English and misunderstanding them.

##### 4.2 The findings related to the Second Question:

The second Question in this study was: To what extent are transfer errors made by male and female students different?

**Table 2.** Transfer errors made by Male and Female Students

Gender	Frequency of Transfer Errors	Percentage of Transfer Errors
Male	146	60.5%
Female	95	39.5%

The above table shows that male students made more transfer errors than female students. The percentage of transfer errors made by male students is 60.5%; while the percentage of transfer errors made by female students is 39.5%. This indicates that female students didn't rely heavily on their mother tongue language while translating the sentences into English. We can conclude that female students are more aware of the negation structures than male students.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

As a result of the effect of CJA, this study found that the respondents made transfer errors when using constructions containing English Negation rather than any other types of errors in the same syntactic area. The study concluded that males made more transfer errors than females due to the effect of CJA.

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**Appendix**

Dear participants:

This test aims at collecting data will help the researcher to determine the influence of Colloquial Jordanian Arabic upon learning the negation by Jordanian school EFL learners. The data collected will be used for purely scientific purposes.

**Part One:** personal Information

Please circle the appropriate choice.

1. Sex:

- a. Male                      b. Female

**Part Two:** Translate the following sentences into English.

1. أحمد ما يعرف إشي عن الحادث.
2. الجو ما كان بارد أمس.
3. لا سامي و لا أخوه بحبو شرب القهوة.
4. لا تشرب الميه الوسخة.
5. ولا عمرني شفت الفيل.
6. و لا واحد جاب معه كتابه الانجليزي معه أمس.
7. حمدان مو قادر يعبر عن نفسه كويس.
8. أبوي مو تلفان كثير.
9. لا تلعب في الشارع .
10. ما ضل في الإبريق شاي.
11. و لا طالب حصل على علامة عاليه في الامتحان.
12. أنا يعرف احكي فرنسي زين بس أخوي ما يعرف من مره.
13. سالم مو رايح يزور حديقة الحيوان الأسبوع الجاي.
14. علي ما أرسل الرسالة أمس.
15. ما معي مصاري كفاية.