



The Impact of Mother Tongue Interference on English Language Learning among Libyan EFL Students at Zawia University

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أثر تأثير اللغة الأم على تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية لدى طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية للبيين في جامعة الزاوية

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Abstract:

Second language learning is a complex process influenced by several linguistic, cognitive, and social factors. Among these factors, the learners' mother tongue plays a significant role in shaping their performance in the target language. The present study investigates the influence of the mother tongue on learning and speaking English as a second language among sixth-semester students in the Department of English at Zawia University. Specifically, the research examines the extent to which first-language interference affects learners' pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary acquisition, and sentence construction.

A quantitative research design was adopted, and data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to twenty-two English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the frequency and percentage of students' responses.

The findings indicate that mother tongue interference has a noticeable impact on students' English language learning. The participants reported considerable difficulties in pronunciation, grammatical structures, vocabulary learning, and word order, mainly due to differences between Arabic and English. The results also demonstrate that cultural differences and limited confidence in communication contribute to learners' reliance on their native language during English language use.

The study concludes that first-language interference remains one of the major challenges facing Libyan EFL learners. It recommends that English language teachers adopt instructional strategies that reduce negative language transfer while encouraging greater exposure to authentic English communication in order to improve learners' linguistic competence.

Keywords: Mother tongue interference, Second language acquisition, English as a Foreign Language, Language transfer, Libyan EFL learners, Zawia University.

المخلص

يُعدّ تعلم اللغة الثانية عملية معقدة تتأثر بعدة عوامل لغوية ومعرفية واجتماعية. ومن بين هذه العوامل، تلعب اللغة الأم للمتعلمين دورًا هامًا في تشكيل أدائهم في اللغة المستهدفة. تبحث هذه الدراسة تأثير اللغة الأم على تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية والتحدث بها كلفة ثانية لدى طلاب الفصل الدراسي السادس في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة الزاوية. وبشكل أدق، يدرس البحث مدى تأثير اللغة الأم على نطق المتعلمين وقواعدهم واكتسابهم للمفردات وبناء الجمل.

اعتمد البحث تصميمًا كمياً، وُجِّعت البيانات باستخدام استبيان مُنظَّم وُزِعَ على اثنين وعشرين طالبًا من طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. وتم تحليل البيانات باستخدام الإحصاء الوصفي لتحديد تكرار ونسبة إجابات الطلاب. تشير النتائج إلى أن تأثير اللغة الأم له تأثير ملحوظ على تعلُّم الطلاب للغة الإنجليزية. وأفاد المشاركون بصعوبات كبيرة في النطق، والقواعد، واكتساب المفردات، وترتيب الكلمات، ويعود ذلك أساسًا إلى الاختلافات بين العربية والإنجليزية. تُظهر النتائج أيضًا أن الاختلافات الثقافية ومحدودية الثقة في التواصل تُسهم في اعتماد المتعلمين على لغتهم الأم عند استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية.

وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن تأثير اللغة الأم لا يزال أحد أبرز التحديات التي تواجه متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في ليبيا. وتوصي الدراسة بأن يتبنى معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية استراتيجيات تعليمية تُقلِّل من تأثير اللغة الأم السلبي، مع تشجيعهم على مزيد من التعرض للتواصل باللغة الإنجليزية في سياقات حقيقية، وذلك لتحسين كفاءتهم اللغوية..

الكلمات المفتاحية: تأثير اللغة الأم، اكتساب اللغة الثانية، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، انتقال اللغة، متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في ليبيا، جامعة الزاوية.

1. Introduction

Learning English as a second language presents numerous challenges for learners whose first language differs considerably from English. One of the most influential factors affecting second language acquisition is the interference of the mother tongue. Learners often transfer grammatical rules, vocabulary, pronunciation patterns, and sentence structures from their native language into English, which may lead to linguistic errors and slow language development (Ellis, 1997; Odlin, 1989; Weinreich, 1968).

Mother tongue interference can negatively affect all four language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Learners frequently encounter difficulties in applying English grammatical rules accurately, producing correct pronunciation, understanding written texts, and expressing their ideas fluently in spoken and written communication. These difficulties are mainly attributed to the structural and linguistic differences between the first language and English (Swan & Smith, 1987; Thyab, 2016).

Although English is spoken natively by approximately 325 million people, it functions as an official or second language for more than 1.4 billion individuals worldwide (Crystal, 2003; Ethnologue, 2024). Consequently, understanding the influence of the first language has become an important area of research in second language acquisition. Previous studies have demonstrated that the first language can significantly influence learners' pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, grammatical performance, and even their cultural understanding of the target language (Kramsch, 1993; Mede et al., 2014; Odlin, 1989).

Accordingly, this study seeks to investigate the extent to which the mother tongue affects English language learning among students at Zawia University. It specifically examines how first-language interference influences learners' performance and identifies the language areas that are most susceptible to this influence.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Although English language students at Zawia University receive several years of formal instruction, many continue to experience difficulties in using English accurately and fluently. These difficulties are particularly evident in pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary use, and sentence construction. A major factor contributing to these challenges is the influence of the learners' native language, which often leads to the transfer of Arabic linguistic structures into English.

Accordingly, this study seeks to investigate the extent to which the mother tongue interferes with English language learning among sixth-semester EFL students at Zawia University and to identify the language skills most affected by this interference.

1.3 Aim of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the influence of the mother tongue on learning English as a second language among sixth-semester students in the Department of English at Zawia University.

More specifically, the study aims to:

- Examine the extent to which Arabic influences English language learning.
- Identify the language skills most affected by mother tongue interference.
- Investigate the impact of first-language transfer on pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and sentence construction.

- Provide recommendations that may help teachers reduce the negative effects of mother tongue interference in English language classrooms.

1.2 Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- To what extent does the mother tongue interfere with English as a second language learning?
- Which language skills are most affected by mother tongue interference?
- How does Arabic influence learners' pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and sentence construction?
- What strategies may help reduce the negative effects of mother tongue interference among Libyan EFL learners?

1.4 Research Methodology

The present study adopted a quantitative research approach to investigate the influence of the mother tongue on second language learning. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to sixth-semester students in the Department of English at Zawia University.

The collected responses were analyzed statistically using descriptive analysis to determine the frequency and percentage of participants' responses. This approach enabled the researcher to identify the most common areas in which first-language interference affects English language learning.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding the role of the mother tongue in second language acquisition within the Libyan EFL context. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for English language teachers, curriculum designers, and researchers interested in language learning and teaching.

Furthermore, the study may help learners recognize the common errors resulting from first-language interference and encourage them to adopt more effective language learning strategies. The findings may also support teachers in designing classroom activities that minimize negative language transfer while promoting greater exposure to authentic English language use.

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Every language possesses its own unique linguistic system, including specific grammatical structures, vocabulary, pronunciation patterns, and syntactic rules. Since these systems differ from one language to another, learners often experience difficulties when acquiring a second language. During the learning process, students tend to transfer features of their native language to the target language, which may hinder successful language acquisition. This phenomenon frequently results in errors in grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary use, and sentence structure.

In many EFL contexts, English language teachers have observed that students' proficiency in English often falls below expectations despite years of formal instruction. Both spoken and written English may reflect the influence of learners' first language rather than the conventions of English itself. For example, learners may translate expressions directly from their native language into English, producing grammatically incorrect or unnatural sentences. According to Weinreich (1968), whenever two languages come into contact, they inevitably influence one another. Consequently, the first language often transfers its linguistic features to the second language, leading to what is commonly known as language interference.

2.2 Mother Tongue

The influence of the mother tongue on second language learning has attracted considerable attention from researchers in the field of applied linguistics. Numerous studies have examined how learners' native language affects their acquisition of English, particularly regarding grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and language use.

For instance, studies conducted by Thyab (2011) and Crompton (2011) found that Arabic-speaking learners frequently experience difficulties using English articles because they transfer the grammatical rules of Arabic into English. Similarly, Ashworth (1992) defines the mother tongue as the first language acquired naturally during early childhood, which subsequently becomes the individual's primary means of communication and thought.

Likewise, the first language, often referred to as the native language or vernacular, is generally understood as the language acquired first by an individual and through which communication initially develops. In contrast, a second language refers to any language learned after the mother tongue has been established.

Language acquisition theories also suggest that children possess an innate ability to acquire language. According to Chomsky (1975) this capacity is explained through the theory of Universal Grammar, which proposes that humans are biologically equipped to learn language. Nevertheless, second language acquisition is influenced by several additional factors, including exposure, motivation, instruction, feedback, aptitude, and social interaction. Among these factors, the learner's first language continues to play a significant role.

Research indicates that mother tongue transfer can produce both positive and negative effects. Positive transfer occurs when similarities between two languages facilitate learning, whereas negative transfer results in linguistic errors due to structural differences between the native and target languages. According to Mede et al. (2014) cross-linguistic influence frequently contributes to errors in second language acquisition.

Furthermore, Manrique (2013) identified pronunciation and grammatical errors as the most common consequences of first-language interference. Other studies have also demonstrated that writing is particularly vulnerable to mother tongue influence. For example, Watcharapunyawong and Usaha (2013) reported that learners commonly experience difficulties with verb tense, article usage, sentence structure, word choice, subject–verb agreement, and prepositions. Likewise, Maros, and Salehuddin (2007) found that omissions and incorrect grammatical forms are among the most frequent errors resulting from native language transfer.

In addition, Cortés (2005) classified interference into several categories, including semantic, syntactic, morphological, phonological, spelling, and vocabulary-related errors, all of which may negatively affect learners' language production.

2.3 Second Language

Second language acquisition has long been regarded as a complex cognitive process influenced by linguistic, psychological, and social factors. According to Johnson (2004), humans possess an innate capacity for language learning from birth. This perspective is supported by Noam Chomsky, who argues that individuals are born with an inherent language faculty that enables them to acquire linguistic knowledge.

Johnson further distinguishes between language acquisition and language learning. Acquisition occurs naturally and subconsciously through meaningful communication, resulting in greater fluency. Learning, on the other hand, is a conscious process involving the study of grammatical rules and language structures.

Similarly, Brown (1973) emphasizes that learners' emotional and social conditions—including motivation, anxiety, and attitudes—play an important role in determining the success of second language learning. These affective factors influence how learners organize and internalize linguistic knowledge and may contribute to the production of systematic grammatical errors during the learning process.

2.4 The Concept of Interference

Language interference, commonly referred to as language transfer, L1 interference, or cross-linguistic influence, occurs when learners apply the linguistic knowledge of their first language while using or learning a second language. This phenomenon often influences learners' language production, resulting in either positive or negative transfer depending on the degree of similarity between the two languages.

According to Gutierrez et al (2012), interference arises because bilingual individuals simultaneously activate both languages in their minds. As a result, learners may unintentionally suppress the target language or rely on structures from their native language while communicating in the second language. Since new knowledge is generally built upon previously acquired knowledge, transferring linguistic patterns from the first language is considered a natural stage in second language acquisition.

Similarly, Dwinastiti (2013) explains that language interference reflects the influence of learners' first language on their production of a second or foreign language. Consequently, learners often transfer pronunciation patterns, grammatical rules, vocabulary, and sentence structures from their native language into the target language.

Kavaliauskiene (2009) also argues that learners naturally depend on their mother tongue during English language learning. However, instructional activities such as reading comprehension exercises, summary writing, and back-translation can help learners recognize the structural differences between their native language and English, thereby reducing negative transfer and promoting linguistic development.

Previous research consistently indicates that first-language interference contributes to various linguistic errors, particularly in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and writing performance.

2.4.1 Pronunciation Errors Resulting from First Language Transfer

Pronunciation is one of the language areas most strongly influenced by learners' native language. Learners frequently produce English sounds according to the phonological system of their mother tongue, leading to noticeable pronunciation difficulties.

Swan and Smith (1987) argue that pronunciation errors are systematic rather than random. These errors reflect learners' first-language sound inventory, stress patterns, intonation, and phonological rules. Likewise, Avery and Ehrlich (1992), foreign accents are largely influenced by the sound system of learners' native language. Likewise,

Furthermore, they explained that speakers from different linguistic backgrounds pronounce English differently because each language possesses its own unique phonological system. Consequently, learners' pronunciation often differs from that of native English speakers due to first-language transfer.

2.5 The Influence of Vocabulary Differences on Second Language Learning

Vocabulary acquisition represents one of the essential components of successful second language learning. Developing a broad vocabulary enables learners to communicate effectively and improves their reading, writing, listening, and speaking abilities.

Webb and Chang (2015) emphasize that vocabulary learning is fundamental to English language proficiency and should receive considerable attention from learners, teachers, curriculum developers, and researchers alike.

Similarly, Pearson et al. (2007) describe vocabulary learning as a complex cognitive process that involves memory, comprehension, and repeated exposure to new lexical items. Effective instructional strategies facilitate vocabulary acquisition and help learners retain newly learned words.

Nevertheless, acquiring English vocabulary may present significant challenges for non-native speakers. Learners often struggle with spelling, pronunciation, appropriate word usage, and understanding meaning through context. These difficulties are frequently intensified by differences between the learners' native language and English.

2.6 The Influence of Cultural Differences on ESL Learning

Culture plays a significant role in second language acquisition because language and culture are closely interconnected. Learners inevitably bring their cultural background and linguistic experiences into the English classroom, which may influence their learning process.

Kramsch (1993) claimed that cultural differences affect several aspects of language learning, including grammar, syntax, classroom interaction, and communication styles. Learners often transfer the linguistic conventions of their native culture into English, resulting in grammatical and communicative difficulties.

In addition, cultural expectations regarding teacher-student relationships, classroom behaviour, instructional methods, and educational practices may differ considerably across societies. Such differences can influence learners' participation, motivation, and overall academic performance in English language classrooms.

2.7 Lexical Interference

Lexical interference occurs when learners transfer vocabulary items or lexical meanings from their native language into the target language. This type of interference frequently affects word choice and semantic accuracy.

According to Lekova (2010), lexical interference generally occurs in two forms. First, learners may misuse English words because they incorrectly assume that similar words in both languages carry identical meanings. Second, learners may lack the appropriate English vocabulary to express certain concepts and therefore rely on literal translation from their first language.

Another common lexical problem involves false cognates, often referred to as "false friends." These are words that appear similar in spelling or pronunciation across languages but differ significantly in meaning, often leading learners to make inappropriate lexical choices.

2.8 Grammatical Interference

Grammatical interference refers to the influence of the first language on learners' use of grammatical structures in the target language. This influence commonly appears in word order, verb tense, subject-verb agreement, pronoun usage, determiners, and sentence construction.

Weinreich, as cited in Martanti (2011), grammatical interference can be classified into three categories. The first involves morphological interference, which affects the internal structure of words. The second concerns syntactic

interference, particularly differences in sentence structure and word order. The third relates to the transfer of grammatical functions and meanings from the first language into the second language.

Because Arabic and English differ considerably in their grammatical systems, Arabic-speaking learners frequently encounter challenges when applying English grammatical rules accurately. These structural differences often result in recurring grammatical errors during both spoken and written communication.

Methodology

3.0 Introduction

The methodological framework adopted describes the research design, data collection instrument, target population and sampling technique, data collection procedures, ethical considerations, and the methods used to analyze the collected data. These components provide the foundation for achieving the objectives of the study and answering the research questions.

3.1 Research Design

The present study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the influence of the mother tongue on second language learning among English language students at Zawia University. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate because it enables researchers to collect numerical data and analyze participants' responses objectively.

According to Cohen et al. (2007), a research design represents the overall plan that integrates the various components of a study into a coherent framework. Similarly, Dörnyei (2003) emphasizes that an effective research design should incorporate theoretical, methodological, and ethical considerations to ensure the validity and reliability of the research process.

In line with these principles, the current study utilized a structured questionnaire to examine the extent to which learners' first language interferes with learning English as a second language.

3.2 Data Collection Instrument

Data for this study were collected through a structured questionnaire developed based on the relevant literature concerning mother tongue interference in second language learning.

The questionnaire included a series of statements addressing common challenges experienced by EFL learners, such as difficulties in understanding unfamiliar vocabulary, identifying word meanings, mastering English pronunciation, and learning grammatical structures.

A total of 22 completed questionnaires were obtained and considered suitable for statistical analysis.

Participants responded to each statement using a five-point Likert Scale, as follows:

- Strongly Agree (5)
- Agree (4)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (2)
- Strongly Disagree (1)

This scale allowed the researcher to measure the participants' perceptions regarding the impact of their mother tongue on English language learning.

3.3 Population and Sample

The target population consisted of students enrolled in the Department of English at Zawia University.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select the participants. The final sample included 22 sixth-semester EFL students, who were considered appropriate because they had accumulated sufficient experience in learning English and were therefore capable of providing informed responses related to the research topic.

Initially, 32 questionnaires were distributed; however, only 22 completed questionnaires were returned and included in the final analysis.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

Following official approval from the department, the researcher administer the questionnaire. Before distributing the instrument, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the department administration and informed the participants about the objectives of the research.

Although questionnaires were distributed to 32 students, only 22 completed questionnaires were returned. As Bell (1999) notes, obtaining a low response rate is one of the common limitations associated with questionnaire-based research.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were carefully observed throughout the research process because the study involved human participants.

Prior to data collection, participants were informed about the purpose of the research, the nature of their participation, and the significance of the study. Their participation was entirely voluntary, and they were assured that all information would remain confidential.

To protect participants' privacy, providing names on the questionnaire was optional, participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences.

3.6 Data Analysis Procedures

After collecting the completed questionnaires, the researcher organized and prepared the data for statistical analysis.

The quantitative data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel 2007, where participants' responses were summarized and converted into percentages. A detailed presentation and discussion of the findings are provided in the next stage.

Data Analysis and Discussion of the Findings

4. Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected to address the research questions concerning the influence of the mother tongue on second language learning among sixth-semester EFL students at Zawia University. The data were obtained through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using Microsoft Excel 2007. The findings are presented according to each questionnaire item and discussed in relation to relevant literature.

4.1 Quantitative Analysis

Statement 1

Mother tongue has an important role during learning the second language.

The findings indicate that 40% of the participants strongly agreed and 30% agreed that the mother tongue plays an important role in second language learning. Meanwhile, 20% remained neutral, whereas only 5% disagreed and 5% strongly disagreed.

Overall, approximately 70% of the respondents acknowledged the significant role of the mother tongue during English language learning. This finding suggests that students perceive their first language as an influential factor throughout the learning process. The result supports Ashworth's (1992) definition of the mother tongue as the primary language through which individuals develop communication and cognitive skills during childhood.

Statement 2

Mother tongue interferes in second language learning.

The results show that 35% of the students strongly agreed and 38% agreed that their native language interferes with learning English. In contrast, 6% selected the neutral option, while 13% disagreed and 8% strongly disagreed.

These findings demonstrate that nearly three-quarters of the participants believe that first-language interference negatively affects their English learning. This result is consistent with Kavaliauskiene (2009), who argues that learners naturally depend on their mother tongue during second language acquisition, particularly in the early stages of learning.

Statement 3

I make errors when I try to construct English sentences because of the influence of my mother tongue.

The analysis reveals that 55% of the respondents agreed and 26% strongly agreed that they make grammatical mistakes when constructing English sentences due to first-language influence. Only 2% selected the neutral response, whereas 15% disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed.

These findings indicate that sentence construction is one of the language areas most affected by mother tongue interference. This observation is consistent with the findings of Mede et al. (2014), who concluded that negative language transfer frequently results in grammatical errors during second language acquisition.

Statement 4

I face difficulties in learning English pronunciation.

The data indicate that 45% of the participants strongly agreed and 30% agreed that pronunciation is one of the most difficult aspects of learning English. In comparison, 5% remained neutral, 8% disagreed, and 12% strongly disagreed.

The findings suggest that pronunciation represents a major challenge for many learners. This result supports Swan and Smith (1987), who argued that pronunciation errors largely reflect the phonological characteristics of learners' native language rather than being random mistakes.

Statement 5

Lack of confidence and poor communication skills lead me to use my mother tongue while learning English.

According to the results, 39% of the respondents strongly agreed and 20% agreed with this statement. Additionally, 21% selected the neutral response, while 10% disagreed and another 10% strongly disagreed.

These findings suggest that limited confidence and inadequate communication skills encourage many learners to rely on their native language during English communication. Although the majority supported this statement, the result differs from Ashworth's (1992) perspective, which primarily emphasizes the mother tongue as a natural means of communication rather than a consequence of communicative limitations.

Statement 6

I spend a long time learning new English vocabulary.

The analysis shows that 25% of the participants strongly agreed and 25% agreed that learning new vocabulary requires considerable time and effort. Furthermore, 20% selected the neutral option, while 13% disagreed and 17% strongly disagreed.

These responses indicate that vocabulary acquisition remains a challenge for many learners. This finding supports Pearson et al. (2007), who described vocabulary learning as a cognitively demanding process requiring repeated exposure and effective learning strategies.

Statement 7

I face difficulties in learning grammatical rules that differ from Arabic.

The findings reveal that 55% of the participants strongly agreed and 30% agreed that they experience difficulties when learning English grammatical rules that differ from those of Arabic. In contrast, 7% selected the neutral response, 3% disagreed, and 5% strongly disagreed.

These results indicate that grammatical differences between Arabic and English constitute a significant challenge for learners. The findings support the concept of grammatical interference discussed by Weinreich and cited in Martanti (2011), which explains how differences in morphology, syntax, and grammatical functions may negatively influence second language learning.

Statement 8

Cultural differences between English and Arabic affect ESL learners.

The results show that 42% of the participants strongly agreed and another 42% agreed that cultural differences between English and Arabic influence second language learning. Meanwhile, 10% disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed, while none of the participants selected the neutral option.

These findings suggest that cultural differences play an important role in shaping learners' experiences when learning English. The results are consistent with Kramsch (1993), who emphasized that cultural background significantly affects language learning by influencing learners' perceptions, communication styles, and understanding of linguistic structures.

Statement 9

I code-switch when speaking English.

The analysis indicates that 15% of the respondents strongly agreed and 20% agreed that they frequently switch between Arabic and English while communicating. Additionally, 30% selected the neutral option, whereas 8% disagreed and 27% strongly disagreed.

The findings reveal varying opinions among the participants regarding code-switching. While some students reported using both languages during communication, others indicated that they rarely rely on code-switching. This variation may reflect differences in language proficiency, confidence levels, and communication strategies among learners.

Statement 10

Differences in word order between Arabic and English affect learners during translation.

The findings show that 60% of the participants strongly agreed and 25% agreed that differences in word order between Arabic and English create difficulties when translating. Conversely, 7% selected the neutral option, 5% disagreed, and 3% strongly disagreed.

These results demonstrate that sentence structure and word order are major sources of difficulty for learners. The findings highlight the impact of syntactic differences between Arabic and English and support the view that first-language structures often influence learners' translation processes and sentence production.

Conclusion and Recommendations

5. Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the study and presents the main conclusions drawn from the findings. It also discusses the educational implications of the research, offers recommendations for future studies, and highlights the limitations encountered during the research process.

5.1 Conclusion

The present study investigated the influence of the mother tongue on second language learning among sixth-semester students in the Department of English at Zawia University.

The findings revealed that mother tongue interference plays a significant role in the process of learning English as a second language. Most participants acknowledged that their native language affects various aspects of language learning, particularly pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary acquisition, sentence construction, and translation.

The results further demonstrated that learners encounter difficulties when dealing with English grammatical structures that differ from Arabic. Pronunciation was also identified as a major challenge due to the influence of the Arabic sound system. In addition, participants reported difficulties related to vocabulary learning, cultural differences, and communication in English.

Overall, the study confirms that mother tongue interference remains an important factor affecting second language acquisition among Libyan EFL learners. Understanding this influence may help educators develop more effective teaching strategies to support students in overcoming language learning difficulties.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

Further research should be conducted at different universities and educational contexts to obtain a broader understanding of mother tongue interference in second language learning.

Students should be encouraged to engage in extensive reading activities, as regular exposure to English texts can enhance vocabulary development and improve overall language proficiency.

Teachers should motivate students to reread texts and practice reading frequently to improve fluency, comprehension, and language confidence.

Greater emphasis should be placed on pronunciation training and grammatical instruction, particularly in areas where Arabic and English differ significantly.

Language instructors should raise students' awareness of common first-language interference errors and provide corrective feedback to minimize their occurrence.

Classroom activities should encourage learners to use English consistently and reduce excessive dependence on their mother tongue during communication.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

Like all educational research, the present study has several limitations.

First, the study was limited to students enrolled in the Department of English at Zawia University, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Second, the research was conducted during the Spring Semester of 2024, making the results specific to that particular period.

Furthermore, the study relied solely on a questionnaire as the data collection instrument. Although questionnaires provide valuable quantitative information, they may not fully capture learners' experiences and perceptions. Finally, the sample size was relatively small. While 32 questionnaires were initially distributed, only 22 completed responses were collected and analyzed.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

Future researchers may expand upon the current study by examining mother tongue interference across different language skills, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Additional studies may also investigate the relationship between language proficiency levels and the degree of first-language influence.

Researchers are encouraged to employ mixed-methods approaches combining questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

Moreover, future investigations could explore effective instructional strategies for reducing mother tongue interference and enhancing English language proficiency among EFL learners.

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