The Impact of the First Language Transfer on English Language Syntax for Arab ESL Students at Private Language Center in Mid-Size University Town

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The Impact of the First Language Transfer on English Language Syntax for Arab ESL Students at Private Language Center in Mid-Size University Town

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction

by

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Abstract

This study investigated the Impact of the First Language Transfer on English Language Syntax for Arab ESL Students at Private Language Center in Mid-Size University Town. The research population was 12 participants from Spring International Language Center through Intensive English Program and 7 participants from Adult Education center. The writing samples and interview were the main two instruments to analyze the data. I used constructive Analysis (CA), Error Analysis (EA), and coding to analyze the writing samples and the interview.

The study focused on the syntax transfer between Arabic L1 and English L2, so Adjective/noun order, Subject/verb order, Number/numbered order, multi-adjectives order and others were the main syntax examples or challenges of the data collection and analysis.

The analysis of the writing samples and the interviews found out that L1 played a crucial role in influencing learners’ errors. In different words, the lack of English Proficiency and literal translation were the main causes of the negative or interlingual transfer. Consequently, the study results showed that all the errors made by the participants were interlingual. This meant that L1 transfer frequently affected the writing errors in L2.

The data analysis of the participants’ frequent errors might have been influenced by CA-informed instruction students had and the levels of the students.

The teaching implications of this study that teachers of ESL or EFL should be familiar with the errors causes that face students when they learn English. This could be through conducting studies or research using CA and EA techniques or approaches. At the end, such adoption of those techniques can help to minimize the errors in general and writing skill in particular.
Acknowledgement

A big THANK YOU word to my dissertation chair Dr. Chris Goering, and the members, Dr. Mounir Farah and Dr. Freddie Bowles for their guide and help to complete this project of research. I am convinced that without their assistance, this dissertation will not be achieved.

I cannot forget to appreciate my friends and relatives in Gaza and Fayetteville for their encouragement and support.

A great gratitude for all helpers and supporters.
Dedication

I dedicate this work to my mother Widad and my father Ahmed who didn’t stop praying for me to complete this work. Also, I extend my sincere gratitude to my brothers and sisters who gave me the inspiration and the motivation to reach my goals.

A special dedication goes to my brother Hussam who passed away during my study journey. He inspired me so much. Losing him was like losing one light in my life. I’ll never heal from this, but I’ll keep praying that the gates of heaven welcome his soul. Rest in peace, brother.

Another dedication will be to my wife Shaima who saved me the time and the environment to work on the research. Moreover, I appreciate her for taking care of our kids during my program.

The last dedication will be to my kids: Remas, Hala, Ahmed, and Yazan who charged me with joy and happiness.
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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Students' writing in a foreign language classroom context needs to show their awareness of their own communicative goals, of the reader, and of the writing context (Beloucif, 2017). Despite numerous approaches to teaching writing (such as product-based approaches, process-based approaches, and post-process approaches) having evolved from different teaching methods, tackling English as a Foreign Language writing is still one of the most challenging areas for teachers and particularly for ESL students who learn writing in a native speaking country such as United Kingdom or United States of America or others.

First language (L1) transfer has been a key issue in the field of applied linguistics, second language acquisition (SLA), and language pedagogy for almost a century. Its importance, however, has been re-evaluated several times within the last few decades. Some language learning theories took the position that L1 has an extremely facilitating role to play in second language (L2) learning process, (Cho, 2014). In addition, there are the linguistics, cultural, educational, political and personal challenges that ESL students face when they join ESL institutes and schools in America in preparation for joining the universities there. However, one of the greatest challenges is the L1 syntax transfer on L2. Such transfer causes numerous problems to ESL students and Arabs in specific when they study English abroad. One of the reasons is that Arab countries teach or learn English as a foreign language at schools, so they use English for the communication purposes rather than proficiency (Fawaz, 2014). As a result, they have problems in unity, cohesion, fragment, spelling, structure, syntax, punctuation marks, prepositions, transitional signals and others (Cho, 2014).

What is the Transfer?
Transfer is a psycholinguistic process in which L2 learners activate their previous linguistic knowledge to develop and use their interlingual, (Anderson, 2012). In addition, Hinkel (2009) defined transfer as either a learning strategy or communication strategy that may be used as a learning strategy for the purpose of formulating hypotheses about the target language or as a communication strategy for the purpose of testing these hypotheses. Thangaraj and Kalpana (2022) also added that transfer occurs when the learners hypothesize about the target language based on their limited knowledge.

Types of Transfer

1- Positive Transfer

When the relevant unit or structure of both languages is the same, linguistic interference can result in correct language production called *positive transfer* (Peukert, 2015). He added that the results of positive transfer go largely unnoticed, and thus are less often discussed. Nonetheless, such results can have a large effect. The more similar the two languages are, and the more the learner is aware of the relation between them, the more positive transfer will occur. For example, an Anglophone learner of German may correctly guess an item of German vocabulary from its English counterpart, but word order and collocation are likelier to differ, as well connotations (Rankin, 2014).

2- Negative Transfer

Negative transfer occurs when speakers and writers transfer items and structures that are not the same in both languages. Within the theory of contrastive analysis (the systematic study of a pair of languages with a view to identifying their structural differences and similarities), the greater the differences between the two languages, the more negative transfer can be expected
(Anderson, 2012). For example, in English a preposition is used before a day of the week: "I'm going to the beach on Friday." In Spanish, instead of a preposition the definite article is used: "Voy a la playa el viernes." Beginning Spanish students who are native English speakers may produce a transfer error and use a preposition when it is not necessary due to their reliance on English. According to Whitley, it is natural for students to make these errors based on how the English words are used (Jing, 2012). From a more general standpoint, Brown mentions “all new learning involves transfer based on previous learning." (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2010) This could also explain why initial learning of L1 will impact the learning of L2.

Peukirt, (2015) investigated the relationship of transfer between L1 and L2 and referred to the effects of both negative and positive transfer which can only be determined through comparisons of two different groups of speakers with different native languages. Such comparisons often show that the cross linguistic differences or similarities between L1 and L2 can produce negative or/and positive transfer. Lai-fang (2010) stated that the similarities or the differences in the linguistic system could contribute to positive or negative transfer between the two different language groups. For instance, despite the degree of similarity in some linguistic structures between English and Arabic such as the existence of the relative clauses in the two languages, negative transfer can take place.

The Transfer and the Culture of L1

Sometimes the culture plays a role in the transfer issue. As Lai-Fang said the language and the culture are two faces to one coin; they cannot be learned or acquired separately (2010). Elraggas (2014) lists many cultural differences between the two languages that can bring about a negative transfer in the writing portion. According to Elraggas; "We the Arabs love repetition
and alliteration. In English writing, they are precise, economic and straight to the point. In the 1970s it became evident that a superficial analysis of the surface structure of the two language systems did not provide an adequate prediction of potential problems in second-language acquisition. The major fault of the Constructive Analysis hypothesis is its assertion that second language learning is essentially a process of overcoming differences in the two language systems. (Beloucif, 2017)

**Statement of Problem**

The big challenge for ESL students is when they enroll colleges or universities where their instruction language is different from the ESL first language. This is because they will need to learn a new language and culture. Also, both languages have different systems of use and particularly writing styles. Such differences sometimes confuse the students and cause some errors. Thus, this may affect the academic progress of ESL students and push them to start using new learning styles sometimes with help from the first language (Ahmed, 2017). He stated that to avoid or reduce the errors as a result of the two languages interference or transfer, ESL students should join one of the language centers to improve their English to meet the university requirement.

**What is the ESL Program? How the ESL placed in the language centers?**

The English as a Second Language Program (ESL) is a program that ensures students who are identified as limited English proficient (LEP) receive the assistance needed to reach high levels of English proficiency so that they can successfully join the university or the college and pass the academic classes. ESL is a program of techniques, methodology and special curriculum designed to teach English reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills to LEP students. ESL
instruction is in English with little use of the students’ native languages. In addition, academic content is integrated into ESL instruction to assist LEP students in developing content, cognitive, and study skills as they develop their English language skills. Regarding the placement process, most of the language centers follow the same process of placement tests or assessments. The test consists of 4 skills, listening, writing, reading, and speaking, so the ESL students who have limited English will be assessed in the four skills. After that, the results of the test will place or sort the students in the appropriate level that match their ability. Most English language centers have 7 levels; beginner, elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate, advanced, and proficient. For example, if the test result of ESL students falls on upper-intermediate level, he/she has to pass that level then move to advanced and proficient in order to be qualified to join the university or the college. The period of each level is between 5 to 8 weeks, each center has different system.

Differences in age, gender, and academic level among ESL students highly affect their acquiring a new language. For example, according to a study conducted by Pei and Qin in 2019, ESL students over 37-year-old make more mistakes than younger students when they write an essay in English. The same study confirmed that female ESL students commit fewer mistakes than males.

To minimize mistakes and errors that ESL students make in these Intensive Language Centers and make English learning process easy and effective, educators need to know some information about the ESL students’ first language and culture (Creswell, 2005). This will help teachers and educators to make the learning process more productive. Yu, Rongmei, 2020), stated that language and culture are very important in learning process for ESL/EFL students. Therefore, the teachers’ unfamiliarity with some of the ESL culture can cause a difficulty to
bridge the gap of learning English for new ESL students. In addition, this might cause a misunderstanding or a miscommunication between teachers and students (Qin, 2017). As a result of this, it will push the students to switch to their native language to get help to communicate. This switch, at the end, will cause a conflict between L1 & L2. As Tulbure (2011) and other linguists conducted many studies of the relationships between culture and language, they held that culture and language are inextricably interwoven, and that sociocultural values and beliefs frame the way people think and speak. Robert Lado (1957), in his book, *Linguistics across Cultures*, pointed out that native cultural transfer was one of the main barriers to second language learning.

For instance, Abu Rass (Vol 4, No 2, 2011) in her article titled ‘*Cultural Transfer as an Obstacle for Writing Well in English: The Case of Arabic Speakers Writing in English*’ conducted analytical study about the Arabic culture transfer on English writing as a second language. She concluded that Arab students tend to write long and expanded English sentences with repetition of content and form. In Arabic, repeating ideas and phrases is used for the sake of persuasion. Repetition is presented by writing more synonyms in the same sentence to convey emphasis. This is related to culture influences which is sometimes confusing to readers from Native English speaking such as US. For example, Abu Rass in the following paragraph shows fewer language problems that is an example of the cultural influence on writing:

“Fortunately, I achieve to be a freshman like I dreamed before. I expect a lot from my college. Firstly, I do believe that it will teach me to be the best English teacher in the future because of the different methods we will be taught. Secondly, I hope that I’ll get more and more encouragement to work harder to reach my goals, like to be the friendly teacher. Thirdly, I'm sure that this college will push us forward step by step to understand our pupils and make good relationship with all of them in order to be the closest friend for each of them. Lastly, this college is the best one for me and I'm sure it will give me a lot as my feelings tell me.” (p. 132).
In the paragraph above, the writer has less repetition and, more importantly, she has a thesis statement which she supports with some ideas. However, the use of superlatives in her writing has interesting cultural implications. For example; she wants to be the best English teacher, closest friend; and this college is the best one for me. The use of superlatives indicates a unity of belief, indicating that there is only one true path to becoming a successful teacher. In addition, it reflects exaggeration and assertion.

**The Purpose of the Study**

This study investigated and analyzed the common types of syntax mistakes that occur because of first language transfer for the Arab ESL students in the Intensive English Program IEP. After that, I suggested contemporary techniques and methods to overcome those transfer problems or mistakes.

To meet this purpose, this research (a) explored and discussed the literature that is written about the different types of transfer between the L1 (Arabic) & L2 (English), particularly negative transfer; (b) found the reasons behind the languages transfer that leads to writing mistakes or errors by Arabic L1 speakers; (d) explored the techniques and approaches to reduce the negative transfer by Arab ESL students.

**Research Questions**

Two questions investigated in this study.

1- What are the most common syntax mistakes that committed by Arab ESL students as a result of the transfer?

2- What Arabic speakers believe of the causes of those mistakes?
The Study Rationale

From my experience as an English Language instructor in Gaza, I have observed that some first-year students at the Department commit many errors and mistakes when they write in English, especially at the paragraph level. Sometimes their writings are grammatically perfect but can be semantically odd, and therefore, may have a negative effect on the quality of the written product. However, students in Gaza start learning English when they enter the first grade, but their language proficiency and their writing skills, in particular, remain low when they enroll in the University (Bianchi & AbdelRazek, 2017). This might be because the cut off score at the school is not very high and students may proceed to the next level without being able to use appropriately what they learned.

In addition, negative interference was a problem when I was teaching language skills classes at the university. For example, when I asked my students to write a paragraph about a topic, they started the sentence with the verb then the subject. Another example, they do not go directly to the main idea. Instead, they go around the point before getting to the point. This is related to the L1 Arabic culture interference, because in Arabic it is common to go around the main point before stating that. In addition, ESL students face problems in using prepositions, articles, modifiers and others due to the transfer between L1 and L2 in writing system.

Methods of Data Collection

A qualitative method used in this research. Interviews and writing samples were the two main instruments in the research. The interview focused on the English syntax problems and its relation to the first language transfer. For the writing samples instrument, participants asked to
write one paragraph about a proposed topic: “describe your trip from your home country to Arkansas”. Then the writing collected for analysis.

Limitations of the Study

Participants may not represent all ESL Arab students because the IEP doesn’t have all Arab countries of origin, so I mentioned the countries of origin that involved in the sample in order to avoid overgeneralization. Moreover, the time required for the survey may be time-consuming for the participants, as well the writing samples, so some of the participants might not complete the whole survey or write the paragraph in the writing test. In addition, having different nationalities of the participants affected on the study validity, this is because the English language levels of some participants are higher or lower than the others.

Definitions of key terms:

1- Transfer: It means that an influence of an existing experience is exerted directly and clearly on acquiring a new knowledge, (Amin 2017). Linguistics defined it a psycholinguistic process in which L2 learners activate their previous linguistic knowledge to develop and use their interlingual.

2- Acquisition: Children acquire language through a subconscious process during which they are unaware of grammatical rules. This is similar to the way they acquire their first language. They get a feel for what is and what isn’t correct. In order to acquire language, the learner needs a source of natural communication. The emphasis is on the text of the communication and not on the form.

3- Learning: On the other hand, is not communicative. It is the result of direct instruction in the rules of language. And it certainly is not an age-appropriate activity for your young learners.
In language learning, students have conscious knowledge of the new language and can talk about that knowledge. They can fill in the blanks on a grammar page. Research has shown, however, that knowing grammar rules does not necessarily result in good speaking or writing.

4- **Positive Transfer:** When the relevant unit or structure of both languages are the same, linguistic interference can result in correct language production called *positive transfer* (Whitley, 2002).

5- **Negative Transfer:** Negative transfer occurs when speakers and writers transfer items and structures that are not the same in both languages (Anderson, 2012).

6- **Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis:** It is a structural comparison of two languages in terms of phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon (Tulbure, 2011).

7- **Universal Grammar:** (UG) is a theory in linguistics, usually credited to Noam Chomsky, proposing that the ability to learn *grammar* is hard-wired into the brain.
Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review discussed the following points: (a) a brief description of the Arabic and English languages, (b) overview of language transfer, (c) the L1 transfer with L2 writing system (d) reasons and solutions to overcome the two languages transfer errors.

In addition, literature review provided major studies and theories that have examined the role of L1 in L2 writing. These studies have examined various issues such as similarities between L1 and L2 writing strategies, the use of L1 as a strategy to facilitate content and generate ideas, the role of L1 translation, the role of L2 proficiency, and also the negative transfer of L1 on L2 syntax.

Two questions investigated in this study:

3- What are the most common syntax mistakes committed by Arab ESL students at a small IEP in the south because of the L1 transfer on L2?

4- What do Arabic speakers in the institution believe are the causes of those mistakes?

It is obvious from the research questions that L1 transfer on L2 is the key issue in this research. This means that ESL Arab students who study at IEP in the language center shift their thinking to Arabic when they want to write ideas in English. Such shifting causes many mistakes due to the two language differences in writing system. The research will investigate those mistakes then classify them according to the frequency of happening. Moreover, the research figured out the causes of the L1 transfer whether is related to L1 or L2 considerations. Therefore, some studies and theories discussed the issue of transfer and its causes. Those studies clarified the picture and frame the hierarchy of the research in order to provide satisfactory and applicable outcomes and recommendations for future studies.
Arabic

Arabic is a Semitic language, having a grammatical system similar to Assyrian, Aramaic, Hebrew and Amharic (Abdul Hakim, 2018). He added that Arabic is the official language in many countries including Palestine, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and others. There are many Arabic dialects, but there is one version that is taught in schools and used by the media across the Arab world. Arabic has 28 consonants letters with only three vowel phonemes, which can be pronounced as long or short. It has two diphthongs (formed by a combination of short /a/ with the semivowels /j/ and /w/) in classic Arabic with no allophones. The writing system is written from right to left.

In addition, Arabic has 5 diacritical marks that called Harakat, (Fadel & others, 2019). Those marks or tiny symbol put around the letter to give accurate pronunciation and reading. The marks are: Fatḥah, Dhammah, Kasrah, Shaddah, Sukūn, Fathatan, Dammatan, and Kasratan. The following table shows the marks:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Shape</th>
<th>Sound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fatha</td>
<td>ﯾ</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damma</td>
<td>ﯴ</td>
<td>u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kasra</td>
<td>ﯳ</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathatan</td>
<td>ﯲ</td>
<td>an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dammatan</td>
<td>ﯱ</td>
<td>un</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kasratan</td>
<td>ﯰ</td>
<td>in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukun</td>
<td>ﯹ</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadda</td>
<td>ﯷ</td>
<td>Doubling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

English

English language is a West Germanic language of the Indo-European language family, closely related to Frisian, German, French and Dutch languages (Swan & Smith 2001). English originated in England and is now widely spoken on six continents. It is the primary language of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, and various
small island nations in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean (Ogden, 2009). It is also an official language of India, the Philippines, Singapore, and many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, including South Africa. English is the first choice of foreign language in most other countries of the world, and this is the status that has given it the position of a global lingua franca. It is estimated that a third of the world’s population use some English (English Language, 2015).

English has 26 consonants letters. For vowels, there are five vowels: A, E, I, O, U, and semi-vowels: Y & W. The letter Y can be a vowel (as in the word "cry" or "candy"), or it can be a consonant (as in "yellow"). These five or six s symbols stand for about 20 vowel sounds in most English accents. The written system is from left to right (Ogden, 2009).

Both the Arabic and English-speaking worlds are characterized by great diversity in terms of language varieties, geographical locations and both historical and cultural background (Hussein, 2013). The substantial profile of Arabic speaking countries in modern political, religious and economic spheres has led to ever-increasing interaction between the Arab and Western worlds. Never before has it been more important to facilitate communication between Arabic and English speakers, and unsurprisingly the number of Arabic learners choosing to study English as a foreign language is increasing every year.

Due to the increasing dominance of the English language, the number of people seeking to learn English is increasing. About 1.5 billion people are learning English worldwide (British Council, 2019). English is taught as a foreign or a second language at schools and universities in almost every country. For example, in many Arab countries, the number of English language institutes has considerably increased. In addition to private schools that offer intensive English courses starting from kindergarten (K), private schools with international programs use English
as a medium of instruction in the content areas such as math, science, geography, and history starting from first grade (Hussein, 2013).

**The Language Transfer**

**Historical Overview**

The role of first language transfer has an extended history in the field of second language acquisition, as researchers and linguists have been discussing the issue of transfer in second language acquisition for many decades. Tamvakidis (2021), for instance, suggests that the perfect way for acquiring a new language is through a comprehensive knowledge of the peculiarity of the mother tongue, a notion which was widely accepted at that time. However, he also mentions that the significance of transfer was not recognized during those early years. In the 1950s, in the context of language learning, behaviorist learning theory regarded language as “habit and that language learning involves the establishment of a new set of habits” (Karkafi, 2014). Then, the role of the mother tongue was believed to be very important because it was thought to be the major cause of failure in second language learning. It can be argued that the history of the transfer concept is closely related to the different theories of Second Language Acquisition (SLA).

On the other hand, the proficiency in the L1 can play a role in the transfer to L2 proficiency. This is because, cognitively, learning a L2 cannot be achieved without returning to L1 system, so this will push L2 learners to use the L1 transfer to learn or acquire L2 (Al-Ghazalli, 2013). For example, in the Chomskian perspective, L1 is viewed as the critical basis for learning the new linguistic system rather than as interfering effect.

Karkafi (2014) threshold hypothesis postulates that a minimum level of linguistic competence in a second language must be attained in order to have a positive transfer which is
also dependent upon the type of competence the learner has developed in L1 as proposed by Chomskian linguistic Interdependence theory. Actually, this hypothesis sheds light on this relationship. It suggests that there may be a threshold level of linguistic competence that bilingual children must attain in order to allow the potentially beneficial aspects of becoming bilingual to influence their cognitive growth. Cummins assumes that the bilingual aspects that influence cognitive growth are unlikely to have an effect until the learner has attained a certain minimum threshold level of competence in a second language such as gaining the sufficient vocabulary repertoire which will enhance the learners' diction and enable him to encode and decode.

**L1 Transfer with L2**

Among different skills of L2, writing is considered to be the most difficult skill to master, (Richards and Renandya, 2007). This difficulty, according to them, “lies not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in translating these ideas into readable discourses” (p. 56). As writing is a productive skill, the instructor has to exploit all ways and means that can serve to produce better writers. Santos (2019) asserts that a lack of grammatical accuracy in writing may impede progress. Accordingly, it is important to help learners reduce their errors by diagnosing their causes. One of the main causes of L2 writing errors is L1 transfer or transference.

Kharma and Hajjaj (2011) pointed out that some of the errors committed by Arab students learning English as a foreign language are due to Arabic transfer. Mahmoud (2012) agreed with the assumption that the L1 plays a pivotal role on L2 learning.

In addition, when ESL students write in English, they translate or use English-Arabic-English process which is considered by some linguists as one of the main obstacles and problems in learning English writing. This viewpoint was investigated by Al-Ghazalli’s (2013) study,
which was concerned with assessing the English translations of implicit negatives as found in Qura’nic ayahs and Arabic literary texts to uncover whether or not the translations of this type of negation are accurately produced. The investigation of translated texts revealed that translation of implicit negatives is difficult to process and convey from Arabic into English due basically to the linguistic differences between both languages’ Arabic and English. This sometimes has led to translating Arabic implicit negatives into English explicit negatives.

Often as a result of the L1 transfer, ESL students commit mistakes or errors in structure, syntax, spelling, punctuation, prepositions, articles, coordinating conjunction, transitional phrases, wordiness, unity, cohesion, and many others (Al-Hazmi, 2007). Tulbure (2011) in his study concluded that the negative transfer happens with international students in general due to the lack of L2 proficiency. In other words, when international students want to write in any L2 in general or English in specific, they cannot generate or create the ideas in the new or second language, so they try to get help by shifting to the native language (L1). This happens more with students who learn English as a foreign language than the second language (Al-Hazmi, 2007). This is because students who learn English as a second language have more English proficiency than the others.

According to Ghazalli (2013) errors that are the result of transfer affect all aspects of the language such as; phonetics, word-formation, syntax, semantics, etc. A good example about phonetic or phonological errors from language transfer can be derived from Arabic native speakers who learn English. For instance, all Arab students confuse the English /p/ and /b/ since Arabic has one bilabial letter. This means that Arab ESL speakers cannot differentiate between /p/ and /b/ in use, for example, they pronounce (boy) as (poy), and pronounce (people) as
beoble). Al-Khreshah (2006) also associates transfer with lexical borrowing such as the word (cotton), and (Koton) in Arabic. Another example is (Algebra) in English and (al-jabr) in Arabic.

The study of L1 transfers on the L2 learning and acquisition has been discussed and studied by many language researchers in which came under many theories and hypothesis. Some of those are Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, Universal Grammar and others

**Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis**

Contrastive Analysis is a structural comparison of two languages in term of phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon (Tulbure, 2011). Tulbure believes that mother tongue transfer enhances target language learning when the same linguistic elements were present in both the native and the target language (positive transfer), but the differences between them create difficulties in learning the target language (negative transfer). The central point of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis is stated by two advocates of this hypothesis, Lado (1957) and Weinreich (1953):

“...the student who comes in contact with a foreign language will find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult. Those elements that are similar to his mother tongue will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult. The greater the difference between the two systems, i.e. the more numerous the mutually exclusive forms and patterns in each, the greater is the learning problem and the potential area of interference...” (p. 2).

The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis claims that errors in the second language can be predicted by identifying the differences between the first and the second language forms and patterns (Mahmoud, 2012). Systematic L1 effects on L2 learning have been studied by assuming that L2 linguistic patterns can be largely predicted on the basis of L1 characteristics, which transfer to L2 either positively or negatively (Anderson, 2012). In terms of language transfer, he states that comparative studies between the first and the second languages are one important
preliminary step to understand language transfer. This comparison, he adds, often guides us to understanding hypotheses related to language transfer phenomena.

**Universal Grammar (UG) in SLA**

The emergence of Universal Grammar, especially parameter settings, encourages many L2 researchers to investigate how UG and L1 transfer work together in second language acquisition (Rankin, 2014). Universal Grammar has paid considerable attention to certain areas where L1 transfer may operate. Within the UG framework, many researchers have not concentrated primarily on transfer, but have recognized its importance in second language acquisition (Rankin, 2014).

Elraggas (2014) differentiates between the current UG-based theories of the phenomenon of transfer and the earlier theories, particularly those based on the Contrastive Analysis framework. Accordingly, he notes four ways in which UG relates to the phenomenon of transfer:

(i) Level of representation - generative grammar crucially assumes that representations involve a number of different syntactic levels; transfer may affect some or all of these, with direct or indirect consequences. The Constructive Analysis Approach (CAH), in contrast, concentrate on "visible" surface similarities and differences between languages.

(ii) Clustering – parameters link clusters of properties, which superficially might seem to be unconnected. Thus, the claim that the L1 value of a parameter will be adopted, or will color the L2 learner's perception of the L2 input, is a claim about a whole range of structures in the interlanguage.

(iii) Interacting parameters - since UG contains many parameters, it is likely that a number of these will have to be reset in L2 acquisition. This leads to the possibility that they will not all be reset at the same time. In that case, interlanguages will result that are neither exactly like the L1
nor the L2. Similarly, effect will be achieved if learners adopt parameter settings that are present in neither the L1 nor the L2.

(iv) Learnability – certain parameter settings may be unmarked or marked, their status determined by learnability considerations, in particular by the assumption that L1 acquisition proceeds largely on the basis of positive evidence. When applied to L2 acquisition, this perspective gives a different twist to transfer issues from traditional claims about markedness and transfer.

Among the current theoretical models of second language acquisition, there is some disagreement over the role of the mother tongue in L2 acquisition. Nevertheless, most of these and other models have something in common as they define transfer in term of the initial state (Cho, 2014). According to the L2 initial state, Beloucif (2017) mentions two main possibilities found in the literature related to the issue of the accessibility of the UG of second language learners and the L1 transfer. First, learners have access to UG which, in turn, is divided into two versions: strong access and weak access. The strong version claims that UG is the starting point of second language grammar formation. Consequently, this version downplays the influence of the target language. On the other hand, the weak version of UG access claims that the starting point of second language acquisition not only depends on UG, but also that the mother tongue plays an important role in this stage. Second, learners do not have access to UG, hence the mother tongue is the starting point for the second language learners' development.

Syntax in Arabic and English

In order to correctly interpret sentences in any language, speakers must be able to combine lexical, syntactic and discourse-related knowledge (Ahmed, 2017). Furthermore, speakers must also have some extra-linguistic knowledge to make a conversation mutually
understandable and informative. Peukert (2015) exemplifies this interrelationship in the following diagram:

![Diagram showing interrelationship between Non-linguistic Knowledge, Lexicon, Syntax, Discourse, and Interpretation.]

He explains that speakers – when taking part in a conversation, use these various aspects of their knowledge. First, speakers know the words of their language (i.e. lexical knowledge). Then, speakers know how to combine words into grammatical strings (i.e. syntactic knowledge) and to combine these strings (sentences) into a coherent text (i.e. knowledge of pragmatics, discourse rues and strategies). Finally, they share some world and/or cultural knowledge (i.e. extralinguistic knowledge) to be mutually intelligible.

“Chris gave the notebook to Dana” and;

“Dana gave the notebook to Chris”

The two English sentences contain exactly the same meaning-bearing elements, but they have different meanings because the words are combined differently in them. These different combinations fall into the realm of syntax; the two sentences differ not in terms of the words in them but rather in terms of their syntax. Syntax can thus be given the following characterization, taken from Matthews (1982):

“The term ‘syntax’ is from the Ancient Greek syntaxis, a verbal noun which literally means ‘arrangement’ or ‘setting out together’. Traditionally, it refers to the branch of grammar dealing with the ways in which words, with or without appropriate inflections, are arranged to show connections of meaning within the sentence.” (p. 1)
First and foremost, syntax deals with how sentences are constructed, and users of human languages employ a striking variety of possible arrangements of the elements in sentences (Gelderen, 2014). One of the most obvious yet important ways in which languages differ is the order of the main elements in a sentence. In English, for example, the subject comes before the verb and the direct object follows the verb. In Arabic, on the other hand, the subject comes after the verb then the direct object comes after the subject. This is illustrated in the following examples:

In English: Sam eats the cake (Subject + verb + Object)

\[
\downarrow \quad \downarrow \quad \downarrow \\
S \quad V \quad DO
\]

In Arabic: Eats Sam the cake. (Verb + subject + Object)

\[
\downarrow \quad \downarrow \quad \downarrow \\
V \quad S \quad DO
\]

Another example is in English the noun comes after the adjective but in Arabic the noun comes before:

In English: A beautiful lady

\[
\downarrow \\
\text{Adj.} \quad \text{Noun}
\]

In Arabic: A lady Beautiful.

\[
\downarrow \\
\text{Noun} \quad \text{Adj.}
\]

Such differences in Arabic and English syntax can cause the negative transfer in which L1 speakers transfer that they already know in the mother language and transfer that to the English. Mahmoud (2012) claims that such syntax mistakes that happened by L1 speaker are a result of literal translation from L1 to L2. This usually happens when L1 speakers are unable to express the idea in L2. For example;
In Arabic:     Met Adam the man tall.          (In Arabic, the verb comes before the
subject and the noun before the adjective)
In English:    Adam met the tall man

Previous studies on Syntax transfer

Much extensive research done by a number of researchers such as Crystal, Summerset, and Betty (2010), who all agreed depending on the data they collected and tested, that the native language, Arabic, is falling behind in the many common syntax mistakes made by Arabic-speaking learners when they study English as a second language.

Ahmed (2017) states that based on a review of research, the most common syntactic errors made by native Arabic-speaking learners of English as a second language are classified into seven categories. Those categories of error are distinguished and described: verbal errors (use of tense, phase, aspect, voice, verb formation, concord, finite/non-finite verbs); relative clauses (interlingual and intralingual errors, structural misrepresentation, simplification); adverbial clauses (comparison, purpose, result, concession, manner); sentence structure; articles (definite and indefinite); prepositions (deletion, substitution, redundancy); and conjunctions. Ahmed concluded that the most common source of error is the influence of the native language, and that in processing English syntactic structures, Arabic speakers adopt certain strategies similar to those of first-language learners, including simplification and overgeneralization.

Fawaz (2014) investigated the syntactic errors in the written English of Sudanese secondary school students. The data for analysis consists of 233 compositions and a description of the English structures in which errors occurred and their corresponding Sudanese Arabic structures. The results of his analysis showed that errors in verbs (involving tense, tense sequence, and verb form) were the most frequent. According to Fawaz, the majority of these errors were caused by interference from Sudanese Arabic. However, only on very few occasions
did he propose factors other than transfer as the cause of errors. These causes, he claimed, included production strategies and faulty teaching techniques.

Another study conducted by Abisamra (2013) analyzed the errors in the written English of first-year students at the University of Jordan. The data was based on a sample of 50 compositions and a semi-objective test given to over 1,000 students. With respect to the verbal part of the study, structures involving tense, copula, voice, gerund, and infinitive were found to be problematic. Tense errors, the most frequent of all, included tense substitution and tense sequence. Some tense substitutions, especially present progressive for present simple, were attributed to interference from Arabic; others (specifically present simple instead of past simple or vice-versa) were due to either faulty teaching techniques or the student's inability to distinguish between the two forms of the verb.

In a study conducted on the interlingual/syntactic errors committed by Yemeni ESL learners, Bukhari (2022) stated that most of the syntactic errors committed by ESL Arab learners are attributed to the influence of L1 Arabic linguistic structures. He also stated that Arab learners depend heavily on their mother tongue in L2. He also asserted that “one common syntactic error that students commit as a result of transfer is faulty word-order” (p. 80). Along with this thought, Qaid and Ramamoorthy (2011) analyzed and described features of Arabic interference in paragraph writing by Yemeni University English students. Four levels of Arabic interference, namely, the missing verb to be, the missing indefinite articles (a/an), word-order, and subject-verb agreement were analyzed from samples of the students’ writing. It was found that the absence of “be” and indefinite articles “a/an” in the Arabic language led the Yemeni students to make errors in using them. The difference between Arabic and English word order leads the
learners to make errors and, because of literal translation of Arabic words into English mainly represented features of L1 lexical interference in the students’ written English.

**L1 Transfer Levels:**

How much does transfer happen in learning or acquiring the L2? Many studies and articles discussed and assigned three positions for L1 transfer, namely; no transfer, full transfer and partial transfer:

**A-No Transfer**

This position is based on the notion of the absence of L1 properties in L2 acquisition. “On this view, the L1 final state does not constitute the L2 learner’s grammar or mental representation at any stage”, (Abisamra, 2013). The L2 initial state is similar to the L1 initial state. He claims that although the proponents of this approach such as Al-Khreshah, (2006) exclude the properties of L1 grammar from the interlanguage representation, they nevertheless assume some role for the L1 without specifying what this role is. White describes this position as inconsistent. With regard to grammatical development after the initial state, the advocates of this position claim that L2 acquisition is constrained by UG and that the final state of L2 grammar is similar to the final state of the grammar of native speakers of the target language.

**B- Full transfer**

This position was first introduced by White’s (2000) work in which she investigated the pro-drop parameter. She concluded that L2 learners begin with L1 parameter values and then reset them to L2 values. Later, this notion was refined by Uysal’s (2008) hypotheses (Full transfer/full access), which claim that the starting point of L1 acquisition is different from the starting point of L2 acquisition. Also, L1 grammar constitutes the initial L2 grammar. In other words, the properties of L1 are taken as the starting point of L2 acquisition. According to this
hypothesis, all lexical projections, functional structures, parameter settings and feature values transfer from L1 to the L2. With regard to the relationship between the mother tongue and UG, this hypothesis considers “…that UG and L1 are complementary sources of knowledge that guide interlanguage development.” (Ozcelic, 2018). He pointed out that the properties of L1 grammar act as a filter and prevent the learners from noticing certain properties of L2, leading them to fossilization at a point short of native-like competence. Thus, the convergence on L2 grammar is not necessarily expected.

C-Partial Transfer

This position claims that only parts of L1 grammar is represented in the L2 initial state (either lexical categories alone or lexical and functional categories), (Ozcelic, 2018). Therefore, when L1 grammar cannot accommodate the L2 input, learners have to resort to options made available by UG. In other words, the L2 initial state draws on properties of both the L1 and UG concurrently.

In the literature, advocates of partial transfer are not in agreement over which parts of L1 are transferred and what are not (Sparks & others, 2019). They give an overview of this disagreement by giving examples of some researchers and, according to them, what parts of L1 are transferred:

Najjar (2020): this is called the “minimal tree hypothesis”. According to this hypothesis, there is partial transfer in SLA. In other words, the authors claim that only L1 lexical categories (NP, VP) are found, and functional categories (DP, IP, CP) are not transferred. Functional categories are projected gradually in response to L2 input just as L1 acquirers are assumed to do.
**Yang & Yum (2022):** they claim that both L1 lexical and functional categories are found. However, features do not take on L1 values and are initially unspecified or inert. Functional categories eventually become specified for L2 feature values.

**Romano (2021):** she claims that L1 lexical and functional categories as well as feature values are found where possible. But there will be cases where the L1 grammar simply could not constitute an initial theory related to L2, e.g. the acquisition of French clitics by English speakers.

However, Perkins and Zhang (2022) argue against the “minimal trees” and the “weak transfer hypothesis”. They claim that their data shows the inadequacy of the minimal trees hypothesis with regard to stages of interlanguage, subsequent to the L2 initial state. They state that the “minimal trees hypothesis” fails to give an explanation for the “S V Adv O” data for native-French speakers acquiring English. With regard to the “weak transfer hypothesis”, they show that the morphosyntactic empirical foundations which drive the whole approach are defective.

**Types of Transfer**

1. **Positive Transfer**

When the relevant unit or structure of both languages is the same, linguistic interference can result in correct language production called *positive transfer* (*Ozcelic, 2018*). The results of positive transfer go largely unnoticed, and thus are less often discussed. Nonetheless, such results can have a large effect. Generally speaking, the more similar the two languages are, and the more the learner is aware of the relation between them, the more positive transfer will occur. For example, an Anglophone learner of German may correctly guess an item of German vocabulary
from its English counterpart, but word order and collocation are likelier to differ, as well as connotations (Forbes, 2019)

2. Negative Transfer

Negative transfer occurs when speakers and writers transfer items and structures that are not the same in both languages (Perkins & Zhang, 2022). Within the theory of contrastive analysis (the systematic study of a pair of languages with a view to identifying their structural differences and similarities), the greater the differences between the two languages, the more negative transfer can be expected. For example, they state, in English a preposition is used before a day of the week: "I'm going to the beach on Friday." In Spanish, instead of a preposition the definite article is used: "Voy a la playa el viernes." Beginning Spanish students who are native English speakers may produce a transfer error and use a preposition when it is not necessarily due to their reliance on English. According to Forbes, it is natural for students to make these errors based on how the English words are used (Forbes, 2019). From a more general standpoint, Brown mentions “all new learning involves transfer based on previous learning." This could also explain why initial learning of L1 will impact the learning of L2.

Types of Transfer Errors

This area of error analysis has been a growing research interest conducted with learners in order to examine error found in student writing whether the source of errors was “first language interference” or “developmental” (Anderson, 2012) He differentiates two sources of error:

1- Interlingual Transfer Errors: (Implicit)

In this case mistakes appear because of the negative transfer of habits from the native language to L2 (Forbes, 2019). It reflects the incorrect generalization of the rules within the target language. Forbes adds that Interlingual errors may occur at different levels such as transfer
of phonology, morphological, grammatical and lexical –semantic elements of the native language into the target language.

2- **Intralingual Transfer Errors** (Explicit)

It occurs when learners make mistakes under the influence of the already acquired language knowledge and established habits in the foreign language (Ozcelic, 2018). In different words, as Forbes (2019) states that it occurs when the learners hypothesize about the target language based on their limited knowledge. Intralingual errors are the errors which result from faulty or partial learning of the target language rather than language transfer. Romano (2021) adds "intralingual errors occur as a result of learners' attempt to build up concepts and hypotheses about the target language from their limited experience with it". These errors are common in the speech of second language learners and they are often analyzed to see what sorts of strategies are being used by the learners. Intralingual errors include: overgeneralization, simplification, communication-based and induced errors.

**L1 Transfer and Writing Errors**

Naturally, it is well-known that no one can learn or acquire any language without committing errors (Ahmed, 2017). He points out that learning or acquiring any language might be faced with some errors or mistakes.

In reviewing some studies conducted on the writing errors committed by Arab EFL learners as a result of L1 transfer, many studies show that Arab EFL students face severe problems in writing and particularly in syntax while learning English process (Abisamra, 2013). Researchers, such as El-Raggas (2014), justifies that most of the syntactic errors committed by Arab EFL learners in their written production are because of the transfer of their first language. Transfer from native language could be taken as ‘a matter of habit’, and negative transfer would
be obvious in cases of differences between the L1 and the L2. According to Abul Hakim (2018) interference or transfer could be defined as “the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously acquired”. This fact has been clearly stated and confirmed by many researchers who conducted research to identify, analyze, and classify the writing errors of Lebanese EFL students. For instance, Alanazi (2017) collected 69 English essays written by Lebanese university EFL students. As a result, she found that Lebanese EFL students committed many grammatical, lexical, semantic and syntactic errors. These errors were attributed to a negative interlingual transfer from Arabic linguistic structures into English.

Furthermore, Abul Rahman (2021) studied a group of ten essays written by Arabic-speaking EFL students at the school. After analyzing the results, she found a total of 214 errors (29 grammatical, 35 syntactic, 26 lexical, 3 semantic, and 120 other errors). The major cause of their committed errors was not only negative L1 transfer “interference” but also intralingual interference. In another study conducted by Abul Rahman, a total of 420 errors were found in 42 essays. He has emphasized that some of these errors could be attributed to negative interlingual transfer and committing such these errors indicates that EFL students depend on interlingual and intralingual strategies to facilitate their learning process.

Faraj and Ali (2015) analyzed 20 essays written by Jordanian undergraduate EFL learners. He found that students committed a huge number of grammatical, syntactic and lexical errors because of interlingual interference from their L1. He revealed that these committed errors were due to the transfer of L1 habits. He also stated that the subjects were very much influenced by their L1 knowledge in understanding the English sentences.
In another study conducted by Qin (2017), 120 subjects were asked to write an essay from 150-200 words. The study purpose was to see the misuse of the coordinating “and” in writing. It shows that the total number of errors committed by the subjects in coordination structure is 426 in 103 essays. This means that the percentage of the students who committed the errors is 85.8%. It also shows that the average of the total number of errors committed in coordination is 4.13 per essay. Some of the errors came as a result of L1 transfer.

However, a study was conducted by Fawaz (2014) to see the positive side of L1 transfer. In other words, he wanted to prove that the proficiency in L1 can help in learning L2, not the opposite as mentioned by many studies. He worked on two groups The first group was 24 university students who have high levels of proficiency in Arabic (L1); and another group of 24 students but with low level of proficiency in (L1). After conducting the study, he found out that students with high proficiency had less errors or mistakes in writing in L2 while with the low level, they had a lot of mistakes. He concluded that the proficiency in L1 sometimes plays a positive role to support learning the L2.
Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

This research discussed first language transfer and its impact on English syntax for ESL Arab students at Intensive English Program IEP and Education Adult Center EAC in Fayetteville. For that, the research investigated and analyzed the common types of syntax mistakes that occur as a result of the first languages transfer. Then the research found out if the students were aware of the first language transfer and its causes. After that, I worked on finding some techniques and methods to overcome those transfer mistakes.

Assumptions

1- L1 has a big influence on L2 writing systems and particularly syntax.
2- L1 transfer on L2 causes some mistakes in writing in English.
3- ESL students with advanced level of English have fewer mistakes in English compared to basic level.
4- Younger ESL students commit fewer mistakes than the older students.
5- There is a significant relation between the proficiency of L1 and the proficiency in L2. This means that their proficiency in L1 writing can help them to be proficient in L2 writing skill.

Research Questions

There were two questions that investigated in this study.

1- What are the most common syntax mistakes committed by Arab ESL students at a small IEP in the south because of the transfer?
2- What do the Arabic speakers at the institution believe are the causes of those mistakes?

The Researcher:

I am from Palestine where English is used or taught as a foreign language beside Arabic language as a native speaker. I worked as a teacher of English as a foreign language for a few years. During the work, the researcher noticed the students in writing classes mixed between English as a target language and Arabic as a native language. For example, in English, they used nouns before adjectives (e.g. man strong came to the field) and verbs before subjects (e.g. eats Adam the sandwich). Such errors and other reasons motivated him to think about the languages transfer and the influence on language production.

Subjects

1- Spring International Language Center (SILC):

The research subjects were ESL Arab students in the Intensive English Program (IEP) at the Spring International Language Center (SILC). This is a seven-level program that deals with international students whose English is limited and needs to improve to meet the university admission requirement. There were 50 Arab ESL students in the IEP program, (30 males and 20 females, see table 4.1) distributed among different language levels.

Table 4.1

Students Number According to Their Gender;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEP</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I contacted them to be part of the research. Only 12 students answered and agreed to participate. They were from different language levels and nationalities. They were 6 participants from Saudi Arabia, 1 from Jordan, 3 from Iraq, and 2 from Libya, (see table 4.2):

Table 4.2

*Students Number According to Their Country of Origin*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 12

Regarding the participants’ language levels, they were one participant from Level 2; three from Level 3; three from Level 4, and five from level 5, as shown in table 4.3.

Table 4.3

*Participants according to their English level.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English level</th>
<th>Number of the participants</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What do the language levels mean?

To explain the levels meaning, the following is the levels codes:

- Level 0 – No proficiency.
- Level 1 – Basic Proficiency
- Level 2 – Elementary proficiency.
- Level 3 – Limited working proficiency.
- Level 4 – Professional working proficiency.
- Level 5 – Full professional proficiency.
- Level 6 – Fluent or bilingual proficiency.

2- Education Adult Center (EAC):

The Education Adult Center offers free instruction to adults who need to obtain a high school equivalency diploma or General Educational Development (GED) or wish to improve basic academic skills. Classes are also offered for non-native speaking adults who desire to speak, read, and write the English language, or obtain United States Citizenship. In addition, academic computer skill training, workplace training and Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE) certifications, career support, and test preparation assistance are available.
The subjects of the research also were ESL Arab students in the center. This is a three-level program whose purpose is working with international students whose English is limited and needs to improve to enroll in a US university. There were 19 Arab ESL students in the center, (13 males and 6 females) distributed to different language levels, (see table 4.4).

Table 4.4

*Students Number According to Their Gender;*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I contacted them to participate in the research. Only 7 students answered and agreed to participate. They were from different language levels and nationalities. They were from 4 from Saudi Arabia, 2 from Jordan, and 1 from Libya, (see table 4.5)

Table 4.5

*Students Number According to Their Country of Origin*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 7
Regarding the participants’ language levels, they were; Level 1 (4), Level 2 (2), and Level 3 (1), as shown in table 4.6.

Table 4.6
*Participants according to their English level.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English level</th>
<th>Number of the participants</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EAC has different language levels. There are only 3 levels: 1, 2, and 3. The following chart explains the levels codes or meaning:

- Level 1 – Basic Proficiency
- Level 2 – Intermediate proficiency.
- Level 3 – Advanced proficiency.

The following table 4.7 summarizes the gender participants’ rate in both centers. As mentioned before, there were 12 participants from the International Language Center, (6 males and 6 females). Also, there were 7 participants from the Education Adult Center, (4 males and 3 females).

Table 4.7
*The participants’ rate in both Language Centers*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Language Center</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Language Center</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Adult Center</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Populations & Site Selection**

The IEP and EAC are chosen as the study’s sites because they are the institutes that have the largest number of ESL Arab students in the region. According to the institutions’ websites, in the IEP, there are about 70 ESL Arab Students from different Arab countries in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, while EAC has 22 ESL Arab students. The IEP was established in 1992. The purpose of the center is to graduate international students with a good level of English communication skills. According to SILC (2015) IEP is a professional program that provides English language training and cross-cultural education. The Center mission is to understand and appreciate the students' cultural differences and to enhance their ability to function effectively across cultures. In addition, the center teaches English in an atmosphere of support, openness, and understanding [http://cavern.uark.edu/depts/silc/ark/](http://cavern.uark.edu/depts/silc/ark/).

SILC faculty teach a rigorous intensive English for academic purposes curriculum preparing Arab students to enter the University of Arkansas or other educational institutions of their choice. Students may enter the University of Arkansas upon completion of IEP’s advanced levels in lieu of taking the TOEFL or IELTS exam. The IEP is host to variety of Fulbright
Scholars, International Ford Fellows, and other sponsored students from a myriad of countries. SILC is also a home to numerous teacher training programs.

The participants who studied at the centers were from different countries of origins such as: Gulf Arabian students, Middle Eastern, Latin Americans, and Europeans. Gulf Arabian students represent the majority of the students enrolled in the center. There were approximately 70 Arab students studying at the IEP in six different English levels (SILC, 2014).

Participants:

During the data collection phase of this study, all the students of IEP and EAC were invited to participate in the study’s research. About 19 students would be the estimated respondents. The study’s sample was a representative of the SILC and EAC Arab students’ population. Therefore, the sample had participants or respondents with different gender, country of origins and English level,

Research Design and Data Collection

A qualitative method used in this study. For the instruments, the writing samples and semi-structured interviews were the two main instruments.

For writing samples: Error Analysis (EA), Discourse Analysis (DA) and coding were used to analyze the errors. Statistically, Pearson Correlation Coefficient using SPSS (Version 24) used to analyze the data.

Errors Analysis EA method was an old strategy that used and spread in 60’s and 70’s (Tahr, 2011). In addition, Tahr described the Error Analysis as a set of procedures to identify, describe and explain learners’ errors. Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) added that Error Analysis
does not only deal with identifying and detecting errors but also explaining the reason for occurrence of errors, so they proposed that samples of the learners’ productive English comprise the best technique to investigate second language acquisition and learning.

Written samples were being used because figuring out and discovering the transfer can be obvious during the participants’ writing, so writing samples gave a clear picture about how, where and when the transfer happens during their writing. In addition, 19 participants enrolled in two English language programs. Arabic language was the native language of all the participants.

Discourse Error analysis was the second main method of analyzing the writing samples. This was through the Constructive Analysis Approach. In this approach, the research sorted the types of errors into intralingual or interlingual errors. Intralingual errors represented the errors that are not related to the first language transfer, while the interlingual was that the errors were a result of the first language transfer on English.

For the interview analysis: Inductive Approach through Thematic Content Analysis conducted to analyze the interview transcripts in order to find the common patterns cross the data sets. Coding also was another method to help in categorizing the errors. During this method, I sorted the gathered the data to categories that share the same ideas or theme. Then, I divided the categories according to their relevance to the research questions. At the end, I analyzed the data that made strong points to the research and was repeated or emphasized many times by the interviewees.

Piloting the Study

To make sure that the actual study went smoothly, I carried out a pilot study on four Arab ESL students, two males from IEP and two females from EAC. The students were given 20 minutes to write 200 to 400 words on one of the proposed topics, and they were invited for an
interview that lasted 15 minutes. The aim of the pilot study was to make sure that the time allotted for the actual study was enough, and to identify any problems might occur and changes required for the study instruments.

Of the pilot study, it was clear that there should be more rubrics or instructions on the writing tests because three students asked for more details about how to organize writing the ideas. In addition, the 20 minutes allotted for the writing test was not enough. Two students suggested having one hour for the allocated time. This, they claimed, would give more time to generate ideas and to review at the end. Therefore, I made the changes accordingly.

In the interview, the students did not understand three questions. Moreover, three participants were not familiar with three concepts in the questions. Also, one question was in its meaning to all of them, but nobody knew how to answer it. To solve such issues, the interviewer translated and explained the unclear questions in Arabic to help them understand, so providing Arabic with English in the interview was a necessity. In addition, I noticed that ESL students with very limited English, like level 0, 1 and 2 in IEP and Level 1 in EAC, faced more difficulty understanding and answering the questions.

**Inter-Coder Reliability**

In order to promote an optimal level of agreement between the researcher and the two external raters, I held a session and a discussion in which two written compositions were selected randomly from the samples and were corrected by each one of them. Each of the two raters was provided with a closed set of well-defined categories and subcategories of errors. When the compositions were compared, the result was disappointing. While the types of errors were almost the same, there was a problem with the number of errors, especially in punctuation, where each rater tabulated a different number of errors in many of the detected error types. After a time of
discussion, we discovered that most of the difference was the result of overlooking errors. At the end, we were convinced that there were too many items to look at in our students’ writing. In addition, we recommended analyzing the written samples carefully by reading each sample twice and slowly, in order to make sure that all errors would be detected.

**Procedures and Research Instruments:**

I contacted the IEP and EAC administration offices to start the data collection process. After receiving approval, I contacted the 19 participants (12 from IEP & 7 from EAC) and agreed on the time and place to meet and carry out the two steps, Writing samples and interviews.

**Step One: Writing Samples**

Three steps were followed to conduct the writing test. First step: I started with the writing test in Arabic, in which participants had to write 200 to 300 words in their native language about the proposed topic: “describe your trip from your home country to Arkansas”, and 25 minutes allocated for that. Second Step: the participants asked to write about the proposed topic in English with the same word number and time allocated. Third step: I contacted an Arabic specialist to evaluate the Arabic writings through investigating the errors. The same with the English writings, a specialist of Writing Composition investigated the errors in English writings.

After that, the researcher started classifying and clustering the students’ writing errors by following the five steps identified by Ellis (1997):

— Collecting data;
— Identifying errors;
— Classifying errors;
— Analyzing errors; and
— Explaining errors.
After following the steps, I grouped the errors to different groups and categories. For example, the errors that were related to punctuation sorted in one group, and that related to structure put in a different group and so on. This helped in analyzing the data.

To make sure that the errors classifications and analysis were correct, I contacted Assistant Professor of Composition in English Department to check the errors classifications and analysis. The professor was helpful to guide and give some advice of how to classify and analyze the errors.

In addition, I used the idea of error classifications according to Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) method. They classified L2 learners’ errors into four types, though the relative proportion of the four types vary depending on many linguistic and psychological factors: (1) developmental errors similar to child’s errors acquiring their native language; (2) interlingual errors which reflect structures in the learner’s native language; (3) ambiguous errors which could be classified equally well as developmental or inter-lingual; and (4) other errors for those that do not fit into any type.

Specifically, at the end, I employed two methods to classify the errors: *Contrastive Analysis* to identify inter-lingual errors (errors of LI interference) and *Error Analysis* to identify intra-lingual ones (errors which have nothing to do with LI interference). To facilitate the process, I provided a checklist of all possible error types that I expected to fall within the following main categories:

1. Nouns
2. Adverbs
3. Adjectives
4. Punctuation
5. Pronouns
6. Articles
7. Conjunctions
8. Capitalization
9. Verbs
10. Prepositions
11. Sentence problems
12. Miscellaneous

Then I classified errors into groups or categories and sub-categories with the percentage of each category. The main examined categories were grammar, syntax, lexis, and semantic/substances. Then the sub-categories divided into verbs, adverbs, nouns, pronouns, articles, adjectives, prepositions, conjunctions, punctuation, capitalization, sentence problems, and miscellaneous, as shown in Table 4.8:

Table 4.8

Sub-categories according to their main categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Syntax</th>
<th>Lexis</th>
<th>Semantics/Substance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>Sentence structure</td>
<td>Word choice</td>
<td>Capitalization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>Nouns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Spelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reported speech</td>
<td>pronouns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Punctuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singular/plural</td>
<td>Word order</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Literal Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>Coordination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Relative clauses

Irregular verbs

Tenses

Possessive case

**Step Two: The Interview**

While the writing section can tell some information about the transfer between L1 and L2, it was not easy to figure out what is going in the participants’ mind, so it is necessary to listen to them through conducting the interviews. A month after conducting the writing samples, I contacted the participants again to set up the interview place and time. In three weeks, I interviewed all of them in different days and time. The interview time was 20-30 minutes.

The interview consisted of 12 open-ended questions, (see the indexes, pg 115). The questions elicit students’ knowledge of whether they make transfer or not, and if they were aware of these transfer consequences.

**Confidentiality:**

The information gathered from the participants saved in a coded excel and SPSS files. Only the researcher had access to such information. This confidentiality helped the study to be more reliable and authentic.

**Validity**

As a researcher, it was important to keep the concept of validity in mind at all times when designing a study. I discussed the study design with an advisor and a group of colleagues who
are experts in conducting written test and interviews. This helped to ensure that validity is preserved at every stage of the process.
Chapter IV

Data Collection and Analysis

The purpose of this research was to discuss the first language transfer and its impact on English syntax for ESL Arab students at IEP and EAC. I investigated and analyzed the common types of syntax mistakes that occurred as a result of first language transfer. After that, I investigated the causes of the transfer mistakes.

Research Questions

There were two questions investigated in the study.

3- What are the common syntax mistakes committed by Arab ESL students at a small IEP and EAC in the mid-south because of transfer?

4- What do the Arabic speakers at the Institutions believe are the causes of those mistakes?

Data Analysis

To answer the research question one, Error Analysis (EA) was the key method that used to investigate and analyze the errors that made by the participants. The analysis procedures were divided into four steps. The first step was conducting an error analysis on the 19 participants’ writings. During this step, I identified the errors and categorized them into different groups. The second step used the coding technique to determine the different types of errors. The third step was to see which errors have been made as a result of a L1 transfer and which as non-L1 transfer. In this step, I followed the Contrastive Analysis approach (CA) to help in sorting the errors into interlingual and intralingual errors. The last step, I calculated the frequency of the errors in each type through finding the percentage, mean, median, and mode.
Since the language transfer is connected with the mental thinking or process, it was important to conduct the interview to investigate the participants’ thinking and feedback about the transfer process when they did the writings. Thus, my analysis to the interview started by recording and transcribing the participants’ talks or insights.

**Writing Samples Results:**

Figure 4.8

*The participants’ distribution at IEP and EAC:*

At the participation day, as shown in figure 4.8, I met the first group of 12 participants from IEP program at the Spring International Language Center (SILC). Then, I explained the writing instruction in both English and Arabic to make sure they understand what to do. They were given 25 minutes to write about 200-300 words in response to a prompt adapted from the Oxford Placement Test: “Write a well-organized paragraph of 200-300 words to describe your
trip from your home country to Arkansas. Support your argument or answer with specific examples.” At the end, I collected all the writings. A week later, I did the same process with the Education Adult Center (EAC) participants. They were 7 participants.

Generally, all 19 participants performed the task without major problems. The vast majority of the students wrote more than 260 words. Only two students wrote less than 260 words.

The first step of analyzing the students’ errors, I contacted an English language specialist to help in finding and classifying the errors in English. The Specialist checked and analyzed each piece of writing and categorized the errors into different groups. For the Arabic writing analysis, a teacher of Arabic language and I analyzed the Arabic writings and classified the errors into different groups. We followed the Arabic Standard Analysis Table to analyze the errors. Then, I listed briefly the errors in both languages in order to find any potential influence or correlation between L1 and L2 writing abilities. Also, this helped me to decide whether the detected errors were interlingual or intralingual. In different words, it shows if participants shifted to think in Arabic when started to write the ideas in English, or not. The discussion and classification of errors were sequenced according to the frequency of each type. In order to find such correlation between L1 and L2 writing problems, I ran a Pearson Correlation Coefficient using SPSS (Version 24). Statistically, to have a significant correlation, the value must be $r \geq .5$. Both Arabic and English results were the variations in this research. The initial result after conducting the correlation, was significant ($r=.606$). This indicated that there is a big influence or transfer of L1 on L2. Another supporting result showed that participants who had few errors in L1 had few errors in L2 and vice versa. This assured that L1 proficiency had an influence or impact on L2
writing abilities. Cummins (2000) supported such influence and confirmed that the cognitive proficiency and literacy skills can be transferred from language to another.

Table 4.9 below indicates that the participants made many errors that some were very frequent and others not. The total number of errors was 750 errors distributing into 16 different types or groups. A percentage was added to each type to see how frequent the errors made in the participants’ writings.

Table 4.9

*Represents the most common errors committed by Arab ESL in English writing in IEF and EAC:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error types</th>
<th>Number of errors</th>
<th>Number of Participants made the error</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject-verb Agreement</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Order</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation Marks</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb Tense Misuse</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run-on Sentences</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragment Sentences</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rambling Sentences</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect Word Spelling (Homophones)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homonym Confusion</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing/ Misplaced Articles (a, an, the)</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition Signals Misuse</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wordiness</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinating Conjunction (and, but, or)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong Preposition</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The highest three frequent errors made in verb-tense misuse (132), punctuation (129) and words order (111) encouraged the me to give more details about those errors to see if there was a connection with the language transfer. This also can expand the knowledge of the readers and who are interested in errors investigation. After that I will focus on the syntax errors transfer. The following three tables show and analyze those errors in more details:

**A. Verb Tenses Errors:**

Table 4.10

*Common Errors in Verb Tenses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Verbs Errors</th>
<th>Number of errors</th>
<th>Number of Participants made the Errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of incorrect Verb Tense</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission of ‘verb to be’ When used as a main verb</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission of ‘s’ in the Third Person Singular</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement of Subject and Verb</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Past After ‘to’</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confusion Between Active and Passive</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adding ‘ed’ to make past tense of Irregular Verbs</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Use of past tense after modal auxiliaries 12 8

Total 132

As shown in the table 4.10, ‘using incorrect verb tense’ was the highest frequent errors made in the writings. There were 39 errors made by 12 participants. For example, participant # 4 from IEP wrote:

...When I was at the university, I meet my instructor for the first time. He welcome me...

In the example, the action happened in the past tense, so the verbs supposed to be in the past, but the participant used present tense ‘meet’ and ‘welcome’. Therefore, the correct verbs are: met’ and ‘welcomed’, as a past tense.

The second highest frequent error was ‘deleting verb to be’. About 20 errors made by 12 participants. For example, participant #6 from EAC. He wrote:

...In the plane there....many people sit inside... and the pilot... sit in front...

As shown in the example, the participant didn’t write the verb to be ‘were’ in the first clause, and the verb ‘was’ in the second clause after the word ‘pilot’. Both need verb to be grammatically correct.

B. Punctuation Errors:

Punctuation marks issue is very common among English language learners (Yakhontova, T., 2020). Yakhontova stated the Punctuation marks as follow:

“full stop or period (.), comma (,), semicolon (;), colon (:), dash (–), hyphen (-), square brackets ([]), braces (also called “brackets”) {)}, parentheses (), apostrophe (’), quotation marks (“ ”) or inverted commas (‘ ’), question mark (?), exclamation point or mark (!), ellipsis (...), and slash (/) and others”.
Each mark has different frequency of misuse. Carrillo & Marcella, 2020 added that comma and period are the most common problems for non-native speakers of English. This is due to the big use of those two marks in writing skill in English. As shown in table 4.11, the punctuation marks of period and comma were the highest errors made by the participants. For the comma, there are 32 errors by 12 participants while the period has 30 errors made by 11 participants.

Table 4.11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Errors in Punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Types of Punctuation errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deletion/Misuse of Period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deletion/Misuse of Comma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission/Deletion of Question Mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deletion/Misuse of use Semicolon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deletion/Misuse of Use Colon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deletion/Misuse of Use Exclamatory Mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deletion/Misuse of Apostrophe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitalization Confusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generally, table 4.11 showed there are a total of 129 errors of punctuation marks. The following example, from Participants # 5 from IEP, showed the errors in using period and comma:
When I arrived in US I felt I wanted to go my country I miss my family. Then my frind osama told me not to worry, it is a good country and we enjoy here. My programme corodinator Nadia saw us and talked us to hotel, it was not easy day.

Participant # 5 example showed many errors in period and comma. For example, the writer missed the comma twice in the first line after the works US and then. As well for the period, it was missed after the word country. One position, the participant misused the period; a comma used instead of a period. This is after the word ‘worry’ in the second line. From the example of three-line paragraph, the participant made 6 errors in comma and 3 errors in period. Thus, this example assured how those two marks have a big issue in English Language Learners ELL writings.

**C. Word Order Errors (Syntax Errors):**

From table 4.12, adjective/noun, subject/verb, and number/numbered orders were the most common errors made by ESL Arabic speaking students. The table also showed that 11 students made 30 errors in adjective/noun order which was the highest, followed by the 25 errors of subject/verb made by 10 participants, and 25 errors of number/nouns orders made by 10 participants. This research investigated and analyzed in depth those errors with analytical examples from the participants’ writings, since the main focus of the research is syntax errors.

Table 4.12

*Common Errors in Word Order*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Errors</th>
<th>Number of Errors</th>
<th>Number of Participants Made the errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Adjective/Noun Order</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Subject/Verb Order</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question One:

*What are the most common syntax mistakes committed by Arab ESL students at a small IEP and EAC in the south because of transfer?*

Syntax errors were one of the most common errors that happened with ESL Arab students at IEP and EAC. It was the third highest number of errors in this research. Table 4.11 showed that the participants made a total of 111 syntax errors in all writings. For example, there were 31 errors in adjective/noun order, 25 errors in subject/verb order, 25 errors in number/noun errors, 14 errors in multi-adjective order, and 16 errors of other types. Table 4.13 explained the errors in more details with the number of participants that made the errors.

Table 4.13

*The syntax errors and the number of participants made the errors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Syntax Errors</th>
<th># of Errors</th>
<th># of participants made the errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Adjective/Noun Order</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Subject/Verb Order</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Passive/active</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Embedded Subject</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Delay Subject</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To analyze syntax errors, I divided the errors into categories (adjective/noun order, subject/verb order, numbers/numbered nouns order, multi-adjectives order, and other errors) and sub-categories of the subject/verbs order (passive/active, embedded subject, delay subject, emphatic subject, and verb to be). This division provided a clearer picture about all syntax related errors. Moreover, I sorted the participants according to their levels of English to show the number of the errors made in different levels. IEP at SILC has six levels (100, 200, 300, 400, 500, and 600) but the participants who agreed to participate in this research were from levels: 2, 3, 4, and 5. For the EAC, there were three levels (1 as basic, 2 as intermediate, and 3 as advanced). Therefore, table 4.14 showed the number of syntax errors at each level of the IEP and EAC. Then, the tables followed by examples from the participants’ writing.

Table 4.14
The number of Syntax errors according to the language levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syntax errors</th>
<th># of Errors</th>
<th>IEP Levels</th>
<th>EAC Levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjective/Noun Order</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>L2 L3 L4 L5</td>
<td>L1 L2 L3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<td>Adjective/Noun Order</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>L2 L3 L4 L5</td>
<td>L1 L2 L3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1- Adjective and Noun Order:

Unlike English, adjectives in Arabic come after the nouns they qualify and should agree with it in gender, number, and sometimes even in definiteness, (Alhajailan, Dina 2020). For that, it is common among Arab ESL students to use the noun before the adjective when they want to describe something in English. To illustrate the interference, Alhajailan gave following example:

English: I saw a **nice car** in the garage.

Arabic: I saw a **car nice** in the garage.
In this example, in Arabic, the adjective (nice) came after the noun (car). This indicates that Arabic speakers often use or apply the same rule from Arabic to English which causes errors or mistakes (Alasfour, Saud, 2018). In other words, Alasfour added that many ESL beginners perform literal translation when they want to write in English. They move or shift the same order in Arabic to English. Some linguistics scholars call it ‘Double Translation Process’, and others call it ‘code-switching’ which is “any non-instructed use of the first language writing during the second language writing process” (Woodall, 2008).

In analyzing the data in table 4.14, there are 17 participants committed (31) errors with the adjective and noun order. The following is an example of a participant # 3 from IEP:

... I Have a trip beatifol because I meeted many friends from different places or countries. They were people good...

This piece of writing showed two errors of adjective-noun order. The first one ‘a trip beatifol, and the second error in ‘people good’. This participant did a word-for-word translation from Arabic because Arabic language the noun comes before adjective. In Arabic language, we say ‘Rihla Jameela’ which the literal translation is ‘trip beautiful’, however in English, it should be ‘a beautiful Trip’. The same error structure happened with the second example ‘peoples good’. In Arabic, it is said ‘Nas Jameleen’, which the literal translation is ‘people good’.

More examples from participants’ writings:

Participant #10 from IEP:

1- I got on a plane huge.

2- In the plane a host gentle helped me to carry the bag.

Participant # 2 from EAC:
3- A man is tall stopped me to borrow my cell phone.

4- Airport crowded makes me stressed.

5- I miss my home beautiful because I lived most of my life.

Participant #7 from EAC:

6- The English good helped me to check in and out.

7- A Tax white took me to the hotel tall.

8- I introduced myself to people various and many in the school.

Participant #6 from IEP

9- I don’t like the city polluted and noisy.

10- The restaurant clerk gave me a sandwich big.

In example #1 above, the participant used the noun (plane) before the adjective (huge). In Arabic, this is correct because the noun comes before the adjective, but it is the opposite in English. The same happened in example #2, the participant used the noun ‘home’ before the adjective ‘beautiful.’ In Example #3, the participant might be confused or may have forgotten to use the relative clause ‘who’ after verb to be ‘is’ to make it correct, so the correct sentence is ‘a man who is tall stopped me to borrow my cell phone’ At the same time, the participant may have intended to say, ‘a tall man stopped me to borrow my cell phone”. In either case, he/she has made an error. Therefore, it is clear that participants did a literal translation when they translate the ideas from their first language to the second language. This caused many adjective/noun errors. The following are the corrections for the above 10 sentences:

1- I got on a huge plane.

2- In the plane a gentle host helped me to carry the bag.
A tall man stopped me to borrow my cell phone.

The crowded airport makes me stressed.

I miss my beautiful home because (where) I lived most of my life.

The good English (clerk) helped me to check in and out.

A white tax (taxi) took me to the tall hotel.

I introduced myself to many various people and in the school.

I don’t like the polluted noisy city.

The restaurant clerk gave me a big sandwich.

2- Subject/ Verb Order:

This type of error was the second most common after adjective/noun order. It is noticeable that less proficient students in English had more errors. This is because the two languages have different structures, which is related to nominal and verbal sentence issues, (Al-Rubaye, 2015). Al-Rubaye explained that in Arabic, the verbal sentence is most visible, while in English the nominal sentence is most visible, which means that in Arabic the verb is ahead of the subject, while in English the subject is ahead of the verb, so the sentence structure in Arabic is verb (V), subject (S), Object (O), but in English it is (S) (V) (O). After reviewing the writing samples, it was obvious that most students switched and used the Arabic structure to write in English. Therefore, the total subject/verb errors were 25 errors made by 16 participants. The following are some examples:

Participant # 11 from IEP:

(1) Advised my family me to be safe and careful.

In English: My family advised me to be safe and careful.

Participant # 7 from EAC:
2) **Are** there **few passengers** in the first-class section.

In English: Few Passengers are in the first-class section.

3) **Opened** I the bank account this morning.

In English: I opened a bank account this morning.

Participant # 1 from IEP

4) **Started** the **instructor** the lesson by introducing herself.

In English: The instructor started the lesson by introducing herself.

5) **Consists** my family from three sisters and 2 brothers.

In English: My family consists of 3 sisters and 2 brothers.

The examples above indicated that the participants were not familiar of the differences between the two languages. In addition, the participants translated and shifted them from Arabic to English. In example #1 the verb ‘advised’ came before the subject ‘my family’. In Arabic the structure is correct, but in English, it is wrong because the subject should be before the verb. The same errors happened with examples 2, 4, and 7.

2.1 Passive/Active Voice Errors:

In Arabic, the subject is deleted and replaced by the object which acts on behalf of the subject, while in English, this deletion does not occur. The grammatical subject expresses the theme of the main verb—that is, the person or thing that undergoes the action or has its state changed. This contrasts with active voice, in which the subject has the agent role. For example, “the cake was eaten”, the subject (the cake) denotes the theme rather than the agent of the action. In contrast, the sentence “Someone ate the cake” is in the active sentence. This happened as well
as a result of the literal translation and the language interference between Arabic and English. The following examples illustrated this:

a- Flew the plane.

**In Arabic:** Tarat itaiyara

**In English:** the plane was flown.

b- Written the notes on the board for the students.

**In Arabic:** kotobat almolahathat ala isobora le itolab,

**In English:** the notes were written on the board for the students.

### 2.2 Embedded Subject:

In Arabic, the verb is visible (e.g. went), but the subject is invisible or embedded. This is because the verb in Arabic sometimes carries the subject. In other words, the verb and the subject can be expressed in one word such as ‘went’ which means “I went”, so Arabic speakers sometimes shorten both words in one expressive word ‘Thahabto’ which means ‘I went’. For example:

1- In Arabic: **Went** with my friend to do shopping.

In English: **I went** with my friends to do shopping

2- In Arabic: **ate** with my friend yesterday.

In English: **I ate** with my friend yesterday.

### 2.3 Delaying the Subject:

This means that most Arabic speakers delay the subject to the end of the sentence when they use the Arabic slang language. For example:
In Arabic: Is great and fun the traveling.

In English: Traveling is great and fun.

In the above example, the subject ‘the traveling’ was moved to the end of the sentence. This is common in Arabic language speakers to do when the subject is not important. In the writing sample, the participants talked many times about the traveling advantages, so he/she did not use the word ‘traveling’ again because it is considered a repetition in Arabic. However, in English, all the sentences should have the subject and the verb in every new sentence. Thus, the participants applied what he/she wrote in Arabic to English.

In addition to what has been mentioned, assimilation-dissimilation was another error issue: In Arabic, the verb corresponds to the subject if the subject comes at the beginning of the sentence, but if the verb comes at the beginning of the sentence, it will be in contrast to the subject. In English the verb takes one case, because the sentence begins with the subject. For example:

In Arabic: opened the door the teacher.

In English: The teacher opened the door.

2.4 Emphatic Subject:

In Arabic, personal pronouns are often incorporated in the verbs, i.e. certain morphemes are used to indicate what the pronoun is. This makes Arab students learning English use two subjects. The following example demonstrated that:

In Arabic: The adviser she helped me to organize the study classes.

In English: The adviser helped me to organize my study classes.
This repetition of the subject is common with the speakers who have problems in Arabic language. According to Suliman (2014), he stated that 45% of students who repeated the subject (emphatic subject) in the sentence are low achievers in the native language. In addition, 12% of them have a language disorder. This was clear with the participants who had such errors in their Arabic writing sample. This means that students with poor Arabic writing skills faced this type of error in English as well. Here is another example:

In Arabic: **The teacher** *he* corrected my speaking mistakes.

In English: **The teacher** corrected my speaking mistakes.

In this example, the participant used the first language structure and transferred it to English which ended with an error.

### 2.5 Verb to be:

There are no auxiliary verbs in Arabic, so Arabic-speaking learners of English might not use the verb “to do” to form a question. Here are some of the participants’ examples:

Example one:

In Arabic: Where she go after the class?

In English: Where **does** she go after the class?

Example Two:

In Arabic: You understand?

In English: **Do** you understand?

As mentioned before, in Arabic the verb “to be” structure is not useable because Arabic speakers think that the verb “to be” invisibility does not affect the meaning of the sentence or the question; so, the sentence without “to be” still gives a clear message to the listener.

### 3- Numbers/numbered nouns order:
Miguel and Ramirez explained that in English, the order of the number and numbered takes one form in all numbers, where the numbered comes after the number in all cases (2012). In different words, the adjectives come before the nouns (e.g., nice book, tall man, one book, two books, three books, and so on). However, in Arabic, there are different forms of writing the numbers and the numbered items (Al-Muhailib, Badar, 2018). He added that number one and two generally come after the numbered items:

For example:

**In Arabic**: bent waheda, = girl one **in English**: one girl

**In Arabic**: bentan ithnatan, = girls two **in English**: two girls

Regarding number three and over come in two forms before and after the numbered items, For example:

**In Arabic**: banat thalatha = girls three/ or thalathato banat = three girls

**in English**: three girls.

After reviewing and analyzing the participants’ English writing, the I found many numbers of usage errors that might confused between the L1 and L2 as a result of the L1 transfer. The following are some examples from the participants:

Participants # 2 from IEP:

1. In Arabic: **Pilot one** drives the flight.
   
   In English: **One Pilot** drives the flight

Participants # 6 from EAC:

2. In Arabic: I registered **class one** in the first week.
   
   In English: I registered for **one class** in the first week.

3. In Arabic: **Bags two** checked in in Jeddah Airport.
   
   In English: **Two bags were** checked in at Jeddah Airport.
(4) In Arabic: **Friends two** waited for me in XNA airport.

   In English: **Two friends** waited for me in the XNA airport.

Participants # 11 from IEP:

(5) In Arabic: In the orientation, I met **Libyans four**, (Or) **four Libyans**.

   In English: In orientation, I met **four Libyans**.

(6) In Arabic: In the writing class, **students nine** came, (Or) **nine students** came.

   In English: In the writing class, **nine students** attended.

   In example 1, the number ‘one’ came after the noun ‘pilot’ because in Arabic this is correct, but in English it is not. English starts with the number followed by the numbered noun, so the correct form should be ‘one pilot’. The same issue with examples 2, 3, and 4. However, for the number over 2, there are two forms: the numbers can come before or after the numbered nouns. Most ESL students use the number after the numbered nouns which is considered an error in the English syntax system. For instance, in example 5, ‘Libyans four’ is correct in Arabic but not correct in English, so ‘four’ should come before ‘Libyans’, so the students try to move the same order from Arabic to English which leads to syntax or writing errors.

4- Multi-adjectives Order:

   English and Arabic have different way of using two or more adjectives in one sentence (AlMuhalib , Badar, 2018) . Leffel, Timothy (2014) confirmed that each language has different way of writing or ordering adjectives and could be related to the language origin or roots, structure, affiliation and others. In English language, Leffel stated, adjectives generally come in the following order:

   0. Quantity or number

   1. Quality or opinion
2. Size
3. Age
4. Shape
5. Color
6. Nationality

An example of the adjectives order:

On my way home, I saw three, huge, black, German dogs chasing a cat.

As shown in the example, the adjectives that used are: three (number), huge (size), black (color) and German (nationality or type). All adjectives are ordered according to the general rule of English language stared with the number adjective (three) and ended with the nationality (German). On the other hand, Arabic language, generally, doesn’t have a rule for ordering the multi-adjectives (Zainab & Gregory, 2020). This means that in Arabic a writer can start with size or number or opinion and so on.

5- Other Errors:

There were other errors that considered syntax errors but were not frequent happened by ESL.

Here are some examples:

5.1 adjective/adverb:

A similar mistake occurs with the use of adverbs as an adverb that modifies an adjective or another adverb generally precedes that adjective or adverb. However, in Arabic, this is not the case. For example:

In Arabic: Every person almost has a laptop.
In English: Almost every person has a laptop.

5.2 Coordination:
One of the most common errors is using the coordinator ‘and’ in the sentence. For example, in English when there are some items, they are separated by commas and before the last item ‘and’ will be used. However, in Arabic items are separated by ‘wa’ after each item. ‘Wa’ is equivalent to ‘and’. For example:

**In Arabic:**

Ex. 1: When I arrived US, I bought clothes and table and chairs and books and food.

Ex. 2: In the first week, I opened an account, and rent an apartment and visited my department and finally registered my classes.

**In English:**

Ex. 1: When I arrived (in the) US, I bought some clothes, a table, chairs, books, and food.

Ex. 2: In the first week, I opened an account, rent (rented) an apartment, visited my department, and finally registered (for) my classes.

**5.3. Omission of the Copula**

Arabic does not have a copula with the surface structure, but English does, so Arabic writers forget to use it. For example:

In Arabic: The trip wonderful.

In English: The trip is wonderful.

**Research Question Two:**

*What do Arabic ESL speakers in the institution believe are the causes of those errors?*

Semi-structured 20-minute interviews were conducted with the participants. For analysis benefits, the interviews were recorded and transcribed after getting their permission. Inductive Approach through Thematic Content Analysis conducted to analyze the interview transcripts in
order to find the common patterns cross the data sets. This helped in highlighting the main ideas and aspects that can draw the final analysis.

 Practically, I followed 5 steps to qualitatively analyze the transcribed interviews. First, Annotation: the interviews were annotated through labeling relevant words, phrases, or sentences with codes to identify important qualitative data aspects and patterns. Also, it helped to organize the data for dissemination. Second, Conceptualization: conceptualizing the data was applied to align data with critical themes. This happened through creating categories and subcategories by grouping the codes that were done during the annotation process. Third, Segmentation: I cohesively drew and described the connection between the categories and subcategories to support the main themes or ideas of the interviews. Last, Sorting and Analysis: in this stage, I deeply looked overall the data to see if there was a hierarchy among categories and subcategories as well. Also, I checked if there were ideas or categories more important than the others to reshape or redesign the hierarchy. After that, I created an initial figure to summarize the results.

 The interviews aimed to investigate whether the participants shifted to L1 when they wrote in English or not. Therefore, I showed the participants a few sentences of their writings and asked them if they were aware of the errors and the causes. I gave them the options to conduct the interview in L1 or L2 or both. This means that they can speak and discuss the errors in Arabic or English.

 For the interview questions, I consulted a qualitative research instructor to check the validity, reliability and connection of the questions to the research question two or the language transfer. The following are the questions that asked to the participants:

1- Can you please tell me about yourself?
2- Is it easy to express your ideas in English?

3- What is the most difficult part you face when you write in English?

4- Do you think is it easier to write in English or Arabic? Why?

5- Do you think in Arabic when you write in English? If yes, how often?

6- If you shift or think in L2 when you write in English, is it because:
   o It is easier to generate ideas in L1.
   o It saves time.
   o Make you less stress.
   o Don’t know the writing structure of L2.
   o Other reasons

7- Do you think L1 and L2 writing structure are the same or different? Give examples?

8- What do you do when you don’t know how to write in English? Possible prompts:
   o Take notes in L1 then translate to L2.
   o Do word by word translation.
   o Transliteration Process
   o Use dictionary or internet helping tools
   o Others

9- Now the interviewer showed the interviewees examples of their transfer writings errors and ask them to explain how, why and what did they do in these examples?

10- Do you have any addition, you like to add or share?

The Errors Causes:

1- Adjective/Noun Errors Causes
In the interview part, I asked the participants about the errors that related to the language transfer and the syntax errors. The following were the questions asked by the researcher as interviewer and the answers answered by the participants as interviewees. The questions and answers were reported or typed exactly as narrated:

**Interview # 1**  
*(Participant #5 from IEP)*

**Interviewer**: Can you please tell me about yourself?

**Interviewee**: “My name is... I am from Libya. My old 27 years. My family 3 brother and 2 sister”

**Interviewer**: When you want to write in English, is it easy to express your ideas?

**Interviewee**: “Sometimes good and sometimes not good and help I need”

**Interviewer**: What is the most difficult part you face when you write in English?

**Interviewee**: “difficult is grammar and writing in English”

**Interviewer**: Do you think is it easier to write in English or Arabic? Why?

**Interviewee**: “Arabic of course, because my mother language and I know how to speaking”

**Interviewer**: Do you think in Arabic when you write in English? If yes, how often?

**Interviewee**: “Always I think in Arabic because help me write and get ideas. When I am at my country I think in Arabic in English classes at schools”

**Interviewer**: If you shift or think in Arabic when you write in English, why do you think?

**Interviewee**:

- *It is easier to get ideas in L1.*
- *It saves time.*
- *It quicker*
Interviewer: Do you think L1 and L2 writing structure are the same or different? Give examples?

Interviewee: “I don’t know but I think not the same. Don’t know examples”

Interviewer: What do you do when you don’t know how to write in English?

Interviewee:

- Take notes in L1 then translate to L2
- Use dictionary or internet helping tools

Now the Interviewer showed the interviewee some examples of his/her writings transfer errors and ask to explain how, why and what did they do in these examples?

Here is an example from the interviewee’s writing:

“...When I fly in plane, I saw a plane huge. The pilot smiling and say welcome. It the first time to travel by plane. Trip it is very interesting...”

Interviewer: Do you think this small paragraph have any errors or mistakes? If yes, can you please point out?

Interviewee: “I think there a lot but don’t know. I think the verb ‘fly’ be past tense but I don’t know the past. Also, the other verbs may be."

The interviewer: interfered and asked: do you see the ‘a plane huge, is correct?’

Interviewee: “may be wrong.”

Interviewer: What is wrong?

Interviewee: “I think ‘huge trip’, we move the words.”

Interviewer: It is correct. Do you know why you did that?

Interviewee: “I don’t know but I use translation - Arabic to English. I write the idea at Arabic and translate to English.”
Interviewer: Do you think both languages have the same structure?

Interviewee: “I think no”

Interviewer: Now I will show you some sentences from your paragraph and tell me what, how, and why you did the underlined words or phrases:

“there a man tall or big waiting outside airport then ask me, you want taxi. Said to him yes. With me bags three big, and the driver of the taxi helped me. He man is nice. Speak English with me but no understanding. then...”

Interviewer: do you see any wrong or errors with those underlined.

Interviewee: I think all wrong. This is why you underlined them. I think in grammar or punctuation, right?

Interviewer: can you please?

Interviewee: no idea but need verbs or order some words.

Interviewer and interviewee continued discussing the errors and why and how this happened.

Interview # 2

(Participant #2 from EAC)

Interviewer: Can you please tell me about yourself?

Interviewee: “My name is... I am from Iraq. I am 25 years old. I work as an accountant.”

Interviewer: When you want to write in English, is it easy to express your ideas?

Interviewee: “Not always. Sometimes I face problems”

Interviewer: What is the most difficult part you face when you write in English?

Interviewee: “writing. How to start”

Interviewer: Do you think is it easier to write in English or Arabic? Why?

Interviewee: “Arabic, because it is my first language and I know how to write from my mind”

Interviewer: Do you think in Arabic when you write in English? If yes, how often?
Interviewee: “Always. I find it easier to think in Arabic and do mental translation to English.”

Interviewer: If you shift or think in Arabic when you write in English, why do you think?

Interviewee:

- It is easier
- It helps me to write more and more thoughts

Interviewer: Do you think L1 and L2 writing structure are the same or different? Give examples?

Interviewee: “sometimes the same. I have no idea about examples, I can’t remember”

Interviewer: What do you do when you don’t know how to write in English?

Interviewee:

- First, I write on a piece of paper in Arabic. Second, I translate all the words to English. At the end, I put the sentences together.
- I use google translation

Now the Interviewer showed the interviewee some examples of his/her writings transfer errors and ask to explain how, why and what did they do in these examples?

Here is an example from the interviewee’s writing:

“...met my friend that not seeing him for a long time. Inviting me to eat at restaurant. Gave he a ride to me home...”. Later at night, called me again to put a plan for tomorrow…”

Interviewer: Do you think this small paragraph have any errors or mistakes? If yes, can you please point out?

Interviewee: “I don’t see but may be. I think the punctuation marks or spelling or...”
The interviewer: interfered and asked: what do you think of these phrases: ‘met my friend ....

Inviting me... gave he a ride to me home’, is correct?”

Interviewee: “may be wrong.”

Interviewer: What is wrong?

Interviewee: “I think ‘missing something.”

Interviewer: It is correct. Do you know what is missing or what is wrong?

Interviewee: “May be because I used word to word translation and some translation is not correct...”

Interviewer: Do you think both languages have the same structure?

Interviewee: “I think, no”

Interviewer: Explained the errors to the interviewee and how Arabic and English are different in subject/verb structure.

Interviewer: Did you get what I explained?

Interviewee: “Yes, thank you. May be the translation was the issue”

Interviewer: That might be the case.

Interviewer: Thank you for your answers and your time.

Both interviewees above found it easier and quicker to catch the limit time for answering the questions. For example, participant #4 from EAC mentioned “I find it easier to think in my mother language then translate the ideas to English”. Another interviewee stated, “getting help from L1 saves time because I have a problem in thinking in English”. A third interviewee pointed out that “Arabic is easier to take notes and then translate the notes to English”. Other interviewees justified their transfer mostly like the previous other three interviewees.

The following table 4.16 shows the interviews conclusion for the causes of the adjective/nouns order errors between L1 and L2 based on the interviewees’ answers and analysis:
Table: 4.16

The Causes of the adjective/Nouns Order Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Errors type</th>
<th>Causes of the Errors</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of L2 proficiency</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1 Transfer on L2</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjective/ Noun Order</td>
<td>Literal translation</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t know the structure rule</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t know the reason</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example, nineteen participants indicated that the L1 transfer on L2 is the big reason behind the (31) errors. They were thinking that the Arabic and English have the same adjective/noun order. Literal translation is the second-high reason for committing errors. Fourteen students committed many errors as a result of that. Lack of English proficiency and communication was the third main reason for using L1 to help in writing in English, so eleven participants counted that as the reason behind their errors. However, there are seven participants didn’t know the structure rule of L2, besides, two participants didn’t know the reason for making the errors or the transfer.

For the other types of syntax writing errors (subject/verb order, Number/numbered order, and other errors), I transcribed and analyzed the interviews and listed the reasons behind making errors in the following tables: (4.17, 4.18, and 4.19):
2- **Subject/Verb Errors:**

Table: 4.17

*The Causes of the Subject/Verb Order Errors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of error</th>
<th>Causes</th>
<th># of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject/verb Error</td>
<td>Lack of L2 proficiency</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L1 Transfer on L2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Literal translation</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t know the L2 structure rule</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t know the answer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3- **Number/numbered nouns Error:**

Table: 4.18

*The Causes of the Number/Numbered Nouns Errors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of error</th>
<th>Causes</th>
<th># of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number/numbered nouns Error</td>
<td>Lack of L2 proficiency</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L1 Transfer on L2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Literal translation</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t know the L2 structure rule</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t know the answer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4- **Other Errors:**
Table: 4.19

The Causes of the other Order Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of error</th>
<th>Causes</th>
<th># of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other errors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi/adjectives</td>
<td>Word to word translation</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverb/adverb</td>
<td>Don’t know the L2 structure</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copula</td>
<td>rule</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb to be</td>
<td>Don’t know the answer</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of L2 proficiency</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L1 Transfer on L2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion:

Research question one aimed to discuss the syntax errors that made by the participants, so the errors were obvious in the writing samples analysis. Adjective/noun errors, subject/verb order, number/numbered nouns, multi-adjectives nouns and other errors were the most common syntax errors. The errors distributed as, 31 errors for adjective/noun order, 25 errors for subject/verb order, 25 errors for number/numbered order, 14 errors for multi-adjectives order, and 16 errors for the other errors. For the research question two, the causes or reasons behind committing the errors were various and different, according to the interviews data analysis. Literal translation, L1 transfer on L2, lack of L2 proficiency were the most frequent reasons justified by the participants. Also, in this chapter, the gender, age, countries of origin, and level of English played a big role in analyzing the errors. For example, Advanced English level students made fewer errors than basic or intermediate. Those factors discussed in more details in the next chapter.
Chapter V
Discussion and Conclusion

Overview
This chapter provided a discussion of the findings, and then discussed the pedagogical implications and the limitations of the study. At the end, there were some suggestions for the future studies and the conclusion.

The purpose of the research was to investigate the impact of the L1 (Arabic) transfer on English syntax for Arab ESL students at IEP and EAC. For that, I investigated two questions. First, what are the common errors that students make because of the L1 transfer or interference on L2? Second, what are the causes that pushed ESL students to make or commit such errors?

These questions were addressed through writing samples and semi-structured interviews with participants representing others who learn English as a Foreign/second language in a mid-size university town in the South. The target participants were different in ages, country of origins, genders, and English levels. Qualitative data for this study was collected and analyzed using Error Analysis EA, Constructive Analysis CA, Discourse Analysis DA, inductive Approach and Coding.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question #1:
What are the most common syntax errors that committed by Arab ESL students as a result of the transfer?

To investigate and analyze the first research question, I used writing test instrument in which the participants did write a paragraph in both languages, Arabic and English about the proposed topics. Then a Contrastive Analysis method used to contrast and compare the Arabic
and English writing system and particularly the Syntax aspect. The result indicated that the syntax system in Arabic is for great extent different than English which is considered one of the reasons behind the L2 writing errors. For example, Participant # 4 from IEP used 8 times subject/verb order in Arabic which is correct in Arabic language that verbs come before subjects, but when it was compared with the writing in English, the participant used the same order which is considered wrong in English. This concluded that both languages have different syntax structure.

According to the study presentation and results in analyzing the English writings of syntax, the most common error types were: adjective/noun order, subject/verb order, number/numbered noun, multi-adjectives order, and others. The first three types were the highest frequency errors. Numerically, there were 31 errors of adjective/noun order which represented the %28 of the total errors. Then, verb/subject order represented %22 of the total errors, and similar percentage of the number/numbered order. Multi-adjective represents %12, and other errors represents %14. The following figure showed that:

![Syntax Errors Pie Chart]

To analyze the syntax errors results, Error Analysis was the next step used to analyze and compare the errors made between L1 and L2. From that, it was obvious that all participants who
made errors in English syntax transferred their Arabic syntax to English which caused many errors. In different words, the participants in Arabic wrote the nouns before adjectives, and when they translate the ideas to English, they translate word to word without taking into consideration the writing system differences between the two languages. This indicated that the participants had no idea about the two languages differences that in Arabic the noun comes before adjective and vice versa in English. This was common with the basic and intermediate language students. However, with the advanced students, most of them didn’t make syntax errors or at least made few errors. This was due to their high proficiency in L2, besides being advanced in their first language L1. Therefore, the results showed that participants who had few errors in L1 had few errors in L2 and vice versa, so the English level played a big influence of the frequency of errors, as shown in table (5.1) below:

Table 5.1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th># of Errors</th>
<th>Error Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SILC (IEP)</td>
<td>Level 2 (Basic)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Adjective/Noun Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 5 (Advanced)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Adjective/noun Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAC</td>
<td>Level 1 (Basic)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Subject/Verb Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 3 (Advanced)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Subject/Verb Order</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 indicated that a student from IEP level 2 (Basic) made 6 errors comparing with level 5 (Advanced) who made 2 error. The same with the second group EAC that 5 errors made by level 1(basic) student while 1error made by level 3 (advanced). This concluded the assumption that advanced students made less errors than basic ones.
This assured that L1 proficiency had an interference or influence on L2 writing abilities. Cummins (2000) theory supported such influence and confirmed that the cognitive proficiency and literacy skills can be transferred from language to another.

The discussion and classification of errors were sequenced according to the frequency of each type. In order to find such correlation between L1 and L2 writing problems A Pearson Correlation Coefficient has been ran using SPSS (Version 24). Statistically, to have a significant correlation, the value must be $r \geq .5$. and both Arabic and English results were the variations in this research. The initial result after conducting the correlation was significant ($r=.606$). This confirmed that there is a big influence or interference of L1 on L2 by ESL students.

**Research Question # 2**

What Arabic speakers believe of the causes of those errors?

After conducting the interviews, all answers collected, coded and analyzed into different categories. All participants expressed that the first languages affected their writing in English for different reasons. Those reasons were literal translation, lack of proficiency in L2, transfer ideas from L1 to L2 and others. Therefore, it was obvious, from tables 5.2 to 5.6 below, that all the errors are made as a result of an interlingual interference or negative transfer rather than intralingual transfer or positive transfer. The percentage of the negative or the interlingual transfer was %100, while %0 in intralingual. For example, as shown in Table 5.2, and expressed by all participants that adjective/noun order has 31 errors and all of them counted as a interlingual transfer because all errors made were as a result of the L1 Arabic interference on L2 English, so this percentage reinforces the hypothesis of existent influence of the L1 (Arabic) on the ability of students to learn L2:

Table: 5.2:

*Number of intralingual and interlingual transfer in Adjective/Nouns Order:*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Errors</th>
<th>Number of Errors</th>
<th>Interlingual Transfer</th>
<th>Intralingual Transfer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjective/noun order</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: 5.3:

*Number of intralingual and interlingual transfer in Subject/Verb Order:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Errors</th>
<th>Number of Errors</th>
<th>Interlingual Transfer</th>
<th>Intralingual Transfer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject/Verb order</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: 5.4:

*Number of intralingual and interlingual transfer in Number/Numbered Order:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Errors</th>
<th>Number of Errors</th>
<th>Interlingual Transfer</th>
<th>Intralingual Transfer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number/numbered order</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: 5.5:

*Number of intralingual and interlingual transfer in Multi-Adjectives Order:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Errors</th>
<th>Number of Errors</th>
<th>Interlingual Transfer</th>
<th>Intralingual Transfer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multi-adjectives Order</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: 5.6:

*Number of intralingual and interlingual transfer in Other Errors:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Errors</th>
<th>Number of Errors</th>
<th>Interlingual Transfer</th>
<th>Intralingual Transfer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other errors order</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other interviews transcripts attached in the appendix as a reference for the data analysis.

It was clear from the two interviews above and other interviews with other participants that lack of L2 knowledge, literal translation, and L1 transfer on L2 were the highest frequent reasons behind the syntax errors. Another main point was that the participants’ level of English played a big role in identifying the errors reasons. For instance, participants at basic levels had a problem of L2 proficiency that they couldn’t write in English, so they shifted and thought in L1 then translated to L2, while for advanced levels, they had a problem of L1 transfer to L2. This means that they know English but not aware of the two languages differences of writing structure. This might be an example of intralingual transfer. The following table 5.7 showed the participants answers according to their reasons of making the syntax errors:

Table: 5.7

*Participants’ reasons for making Syntax Errors:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons of Syntax errors</th>
<th>IEP Levels</th>
<th>EAC Levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L 2</td>
<td>L3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of L2 Proficiency</td>
<td>xxxx</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1 transfer to L2</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal/ word to word translation</td>
<td>xx</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of L2 Structure</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know the answer</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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As shown in table 5.7, four participants from IEP basic levels expressed that lack of L2 proficiency as the main reason for making errors, and four participants from the advanced levels expressed that the L1 transfer to L2 was the key reason of making mistakes. The same results happened with the EAC participants.

**Practical Implications**

In this study, a qualitative data was gathered through two main instruments: writing samples and semi-structured interviews. Despite of the different errors or mistakes that participants made represented in the research question one, and the different reasons of making the errors represented in question two, there are many factors or themes arose from the data that affected the analysis. Such themes or factors are: methods of instruction, and students’ levels in English.

**Methods of Instruction**

As known, participants of this study came from different nationalities: Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq, and Libya. Each country has different ways of instruction at the classrooms. In addition, each country follows its own curriculum in teaching and learning English. For example, Saudi Arabia governmental schools start teaching from fourth grade. While in Jordan, the teaching start at first grade. This means the English language foundations for Jordanian participants is higher and stronger than participants from Saudi Arabia due the longer time of learning English before joining college or university. For Iraqi education system, English taught starting from the first grade but in Libya start at the third grade.
For the methods of instruction, each place uses different curriculum in teaching English as a foreign language. Some follow the traditional ways of teaching English, others follow the modern ways, so such difference in teaching affect positively or negatively on the students when join the higher education or come to English native speaking countries to take English classes. This applies to this study which indicated previously in the data presentation and analysis that there are differences in the types and number of errors participants made.

**Participants’ Level in English:**

Students’ levels play a big role on the proficiency of writing in English. This was obvious in the data presentation, as shown before in table 5.1. For example, students at advanced levels made less mistakes in writing. In addition, they have less L1 transfer on L2. On the other hand, the basic and intermediate students made higher mistake and more L1 transfer. The reason behind this is that advanced students have experienced English for longer period of time and became more knowledgeable of the writing skills or structure. Numerically, as shown before in table 5.1, in adjective/noun category six errors made by participants at basic level, while 2 errors made by advanced level. The same with subject/verb category; five errors made by basic participants and 1 error by advanced level.

Regarding the second research question about the reason behind the L1 transfer, advanced students justified their shifting to L1 when they write in English to a habit used to do in their home country. Besides, the teachers at their home country didn’t teach them how to be independent in writing in English. For the basic or intermediate students, on the other hand, justified their L1 transfer to the difficulty to express ideas in English. Moreover, they claim that shifting to L1 motivate them to write faster and easier. Besides, this helped them to get rid of
writing stress. It is the only way to help them to express their thoughts then do word-to-word translation to write in English that at the end they made many mistakes.

**Pedagogical Implications:**

Do the ESL students need to think or switch to the target language to be able to communicate? Such question has brought a lot to the ESL classroom environment in which includes students, teachers, educators, languages specialists and others. As some educators answered this question and claim that it is a natural and unconscious shift or transfer that happen with any second or foreign language learners. It is not specific to any language or learners. In different words, the learners’ brains shift automatically to think and generate the ideas in their first language then express in the target language. This happened to all learners regardless of their proficiency in L1 or L2, (Abi Samra, 2003). As a step to reduce such interference, an understanding of the error types and causes made by the learners will help the learning process to reduce the transfer errors. This could be through designing and allocating specific remedy programs to different needs of ESL students.

At the level of teachers, they will be able to expect possible future errors in the L2 and start to investigate the causes of the errors with some degrees of precision. Moreover, teachers can draw a picture of the most common errors; then they can identify whether L1 interference, or teaching techniques, are the major cause of the learner’s errors. After that, the teachers can put a plan on how to work with all the errors causes and help the students to have a better learning proficiency.

This research will draw the way for future research or academic works to consider such issues that come as a result of the language interferences, so the research will contribute significantly to the base of knowledge in the second language learning and teaching. In addition,
the teachers can educate the ESL learners to know about the errors they make and how the interference can affect their production of L2. This would sharpen their awareness of the fact that they cannot apply what is in their L1 to the L2. As a result, this will help ESL students to avoid or at least reduce the L1 interference with L2 in their learning or acquiring the language.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation of this study was the inability to generalize the results to other ESL students because different ESL learners from different counties might not make the same types and number of errors. This due to how English curriculum is being taught and learned in each country. In addition, students arrive with varied experiences in schooling and learning of English. For example, English language learners from Egypt have a higher English proficiency than who came from Saudi Arabia, and the same with other countries, so the results may not be overgeneralized to all ESL learners.

It is confirmed by many writings’ specialists that different types of writing pieces could produce different error types. Furthermore, the identification of errors depends for a big extent on the raters’ interpretation of the student’s or writer’s meaning in the context. Therefore, different raters might rate the writings in different ways through giving different scores.

In addition, the human subjects are very important to consider because participants might were careless in their writings when they know that their writing will not be graded. This fact is true with almost all students not only ESL students.

Conclusion:
It was important to keep in mind that English and Arabic are different languages with different linguistic families. Arabic belongs to the Semitic group of languages. More specifically, it is an off-shoot of the languages of South-West Arabia, while English is an Indo-European language” (El-Sayed, 1982, pp.180 -181). Therefore, the grammatical structure of Arabic is different from that of Indo-European languages such as English (Nur, n.d.). These differences were the cause of many errors made by the students.

In the previous chapters, I went over the literature review to find out more studies on the influence of L1 transfer on L2 in general and syntax in specific. The next chapter put the purpose, methods, instruments, and the procedures that the research will depend on. Then, I presented the results that were gathered from writing samples and interviews. Finally, I analyzed the results followed by suggestions to future researchers and the pedagogical implications.

The research investigated and analyzed the data collected through the writing samples and the interviews. For the writing samples, 19 participants were involved in the study and were asked to writing a paragraph about the proposed topics. The results showed that the participants made many syntactic errors grouped as: subject/verb order, adjective/noun order, number/numbered order, multi-adjectives order, and other errors.

In addition, the findings of the writing samples showed that all participants made syntax errors with different frequency due to the different levels of English. Advanced students made less errors than intermediate and basic. Moreover, the results showed that negative transfer was the main reason behind the writing errors. This was clear when I compared the participants’ writings errors in both languages, Arabic and English. Furthermore, the study analysis indicated that participants with high proficiency in L1 made less errors in L2 and vice versa. Therefore,
there was a significant relation between the participants’ level in English and Arabic and the number of errors made in L1.

For the interview, the 19 participants were interviewed to discover their mental process of writing and how they thought about the two languages interference. All of them admitted that they use Arabic language to help them to write in English but in different ways. Most of them think in L1 to express and generate ideas in L2. Then, they did literal or word-to-word translation. All participants justified their shifting to L1 or swift coding process due to the lack of proficiency of L2. Also, they found it easier and quicker to think in L1 to produce L2.

Therefore, many educators and psychologists classified the languages transfer or interference as unconscious habit that all English language learners do when they want to write in different language. This applies or happens to all learners of languages.
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Rankin, T. (2014). Variational learning in L2: The transfer of L1 syntax and parsing strategies in the interpretation of wh-questions by L1 German learners of L2 English. *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism*, 4(4), 432–461. [https://doi.org/10.1075/lab.4.4.02ran](https://doi.org/10.1075/lab.4.4.02ran)


Dear ESL Students at the Spring International Language Center,

My name is Mohammed Abdalhadi. I am a PhD student in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. My study concentration is Teaching English as a Second Language. Nowadays, I am working on my dissertation that focuses on the impact of the first language transfer on the second language English writing skill for ESL Arab students who study at the Spring International Language Center. I am interested in investigating the aspects of language acquisition:

- What are the most common syntax mistakes that are committed by Arab ESL students as a result of L1 transfer?
- What do Arabic speakers believe are the causes of those mistakes?

For that I will investigate the different errors that might happen because of the transfer.

Therefore, your help and participation will be very valuable to my research and ESL studies in general, so by answering the written essay question and accepting to be interviewed, you are giving your consent to participate in this research activity.

The participation is voluntary, and your individual responses are completely anonymous. The written essay question and the interview will take about maximum 30 minutes. Please, do not place any personally identifying information on the question. If you do not want to be in this study, you may refuse to participate. Also, you may refuse to participate at any time during the study. Your job, your grade, your relationship with the University, etc. will not be affected in any way if you refuse to participate. Please note that there are no negative consequences if you choose not to participate.

All information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by applicable State and Federal law. You will be assigned a number that will be entered into an Excel file. All information will be recorded anonymously.

Thank you for your participation! If you have any comment or question, please don’t hesitate to contact me at: phone number 4792365874; email: mabdalha@uark.edu; or my dissertation adviser: Dr. Chris Goering, 212 Peabody Hall, University of Arkansas, 479-5758729, cgoering@uark.edu

Sincerely,
Mohammed Abdalhadi
109 Peabody Hall
Curriculum and Instruction
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville 7271
Dear ESL Students at the Spring International Language Center,

My name is Mohammed Abdalhadi. I am a PhD student in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. My study concentration is Teaching English as a second language. I am working on my dissertation that focuses on the effect of the first language on the second language English writing for ESL Arab students who study at the Spring International Language Center. I will investigate the different errors that happen because of the first language.

The participation is voluntary, and your individual responses are completely anonymous. The written essay question and the interview will take about maximum 30 minutes.

Therefore, your help and participation will be very valuable to my research and ESL studies in general. By answering the written essay question and accepting to be interviewed, you are giving your consent to participate in this research activity. Please, do not place any personally identifying information on the question. Please note that there are no negative consequences if you choose not to participate.

Thank you for your participation! If you have any comments or questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me at: phone number 4792365874; email: mabdalha@uark.edu; or my dissertation adviser: Dr. Chris Goering, 212 Peabody Hall, University of Arkansas, 479-5758729, cgoering@uark.edu

Sincerely,
Mohammed Abdalhadi
109 Peabody Hall
Curriculum and Instruction
University of Arkansas
Fayetteville 7271
The Impact of the First Language Transfer on English Language Syntax for Arab ESL Students at Private Language Center in Mid-Size University

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Principal Researcher: Mohammed Abdalhadi

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Chris Goering

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

You are invited to participate in a research study about The Impact of the First Language Transfer on English Language Syntax for Arab ESL Students at a Private Language Center in Mid-Size University Town. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are one of the Arab ESL students who study English at the language center.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE RESEARCH STUDY

Who is the Principal Researcher?
Mohammed Abdalhadi; email: mabdalha@uark.edu; phone: 4794098696

Who is the Faculty Advisor?
Dr. Chris Goering; email: cgoering@uark.edu; phone 4795758729

What is the purpose of this research study?
The purpose of this study is to investigate and analyze the common types of syntax mistakes that occur as a result of first language transfer for the Arab ESL students in an Intensive English Program (IEP). Then the research will find out if the students are aware of the first language transfer on the second language. After that, the researcher will suggest contemporary techniques and methods to overcome those transfer problems or mistakes.

Who will participate in this study?
The expected number is 20 Arab ESL students. They study English language at Spring International Language Center in Fayetteville. Participants will be a mix of males and females from different levels in English.

What am I being asked to do?

Your participation will require the following:

1- For the Writing test: You will be required to write 200-400 words paragraph about one of the following topics: (A) advantages of traveling abroad or (B) describe your trip from your home country to Arkansas. You have 30 minutes to finish that. A piece of paper and a pencil will be provided.

2- For the Interview: In another day, you will be invited to 20 minutes interview. The interview questions will be related to your writing test. The interview place will be in any place you choose or prefer.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?

There is no any expected risk

What are the possible benefits of this study?

Participants will benefit as follows: they will be aware of the transfer mistakes. The researcher will explain to the participants the similarities between the two languages that causes transfer. For example, the literal translation is the main reason behind the transfer errors. In this case, they can distinguish between the structure of the L1 and L2. At the end, their writing skill may be improved.

How long will the study last?

This study will be conducted on two separate days. The writing test should take no more than 30 minutes. The interview, which will be on a different day, will be about 20 minutes long.

Will I receive compensation for my time and inconvenience if I choose to participate in this study?

NO

Will I have to pay for anything?

No. There is no payment

What are the options if I do not want to be in the study?

If you do not want to be in this study, you may refuse to participate. Also, you may refuse to participate at any time during the study. Your job, your grade, your relationship with the University, etc. will not be affected in any way if you refuse to participate.
How will my confidentiality be protected?

All information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by applicable State and Federal law.

Add how you will keep the information confidential from you IRB.

The information will be kept in a coded excel and SPSS file.

Will I know the results of the study?

After the study you will have the right to request feedback about the results. You may contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Chris Goering or Principal Researcher, Mohammed Abdalhadi. You will receive a copy of this form for your files.

What do I do if I have questions about the research study?

You have the right to contact the Principal Researcher or Faculty Advisor as listed below for any concerns that you may have.

Mohammed Abdalhadi; 479-4098696, mabdalha@uark.edu

Dr. Chris Goering; 479-5758729; cgoering@uark.edu

You may also contact the University of Arkansas Research Compliance office listed below if you have questions about your rights as a participant, or to discuss any concerns about, or problems with the research.

Ro Windwalker, CIP
Institutional Review Board Coordinator
Research Compliance
University of Arkansas
109 MLKG Building
Fayetteville, AR  72701-1201
479-575-2208
irb@uark.edu

I have read the above statement and have been able to ask questions and express concerns, which have been satisfactorily responded to by the investigator. I understand the purpose of the study as well as the potential benefits and risks that are involved. I understand that participation is voluntary. I understand that significant new findings developed during this research will be shared with the participant. I have been given a copy of the consent form.

By participating in this interview and writing task, I am giving my consent for my responses to be used in this research.
THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Date: ----/---- /20---

Personal Information: (Optional)

Gender:  □ Male  □ Female

Age:  □ 18 – 22  □ 23 – 27  □ 28 – 32  □ 33 – 37  □ 38 – up

English level:  □ Basic  □ Level 1  □ Level 2  □ Level 3
□ Level 4  □ Level 5  □ Level 6

Nationality: ____________________

Please answer the following questions:

1- How much daily or weekly do you write in Arabic?  □ minute/s  □ hour/s

2- How much daily or weekly do you write in English?  □ minute/s  □ hour/s

3- Do you face a difficulty when you write in Arabic?  □ Yes  □ No

- If yes, which part? For example:

□ How to start the writing.
□ Translation from Arabic to English.
□ Lack of words or vocabulary in English to express ideas.
□ Generating the new ideas in English
□ The structure (grammar) use
□ The unity or consistency of ideas.
□ Others;
  1-..................................................

  2-..................................................

  3..................................................

  4..................................................

  5..................................................

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4- Do you face a difficulty when you write in English?  
[ ] Yes  [ ] No  
- If yes, which part? For example:

[ ] How to start the writing.  
[ ] Translation from Arabic to English.  
[ ] Lack of words or vocabulary in English to express ideas.  
[ ] Generating the new ideas in English  
[ ] The structure (grammar) use  
[ ] The unity or consistency of ideas.  
[ ] Others;  
1-…………………………………………  
2-…………………………………………  
3…………………………………………  
4-…………………………………………  
5…………………………………………  

**Research Question One:**

5- What do you do when you face writing difficulty in English?  
For example;  
[ ]  
- Use the native language to get equivalent ideas or vocabulary  
[ ] Skip the difficulty and work on something else.  
[ ] Ask for help from classmate, teacher, others; …………………  
[ ] Check other sources such as; books, writing skills websites, others; ……………  
[ ] Others;  
…………………………………………………………………………………………  
…………………………………………………………………………………………  
…………………………………………………………………………………………  
…………………………………………………………………………………………  
…………………………………………………………………………………………  

6- Most studies approve that using the native language to help writing in English is the most common way to overcome writing difficulties or problems for ESL students. What is your opinion? Why?  
…………………………………………………………………………………………  
…………………………………………………………………………………………  
…………………………………………………………………………………………  
…………………………………………………………………………………………  
…………………………………………………………………………………………
7- Do you use Arabic when you have a problem in writing in English?

                      
If yes, how often?

☐ Always
☐ Often
☐ Sometimes
☐ Rarely
☐ Never

8- As many studies suggest that using Arabic transfer to solve English writing problems causes many mistakes because both languages have different writing systems.

That said:

9- What do you think are the most common mistakes you make when you write in English, as a result of the first language transfer?

                      
                      
                      

                      


10- For syntax mistakes, what type of mistakes do you make when you write in English?

• Tense use
• Word order in general
• Clauses and phrases
• Punctuation marks use
• Others;                      

 Research Question Two:

11- What do you think the causes of the L1 transfer with L2?

                      
                      
                      


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12- What techniques or strategies do you think help overcome the causes of the native language transfer mistakes on English writing?

Thank you for your participation.
Dear student,

By responding to the question below, you are giving your consent to participate in this research activity. The participation is voluntary, and your individual responses are completely anonymous.

The question:

Please write 200 – 400 words in ARABIC about one of the following topics “describe your trip from home country to Arkansas”. Please consider the following in your answer:

- You have 20 to 30 minutes to finish the writing.
- Your writing should be in a paragraph/essay style, not points.
- Use Academic writing.
- Use 12 size font
- Double or single space.
- Consider the spelling, structure, punctuations, others.

Write here:

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Thank you very much for your participation.
Dear student,

By responding to the question below, you are giving your consent to participate in this research activity. The participation is voluntary, and your individual responses are completely anonymous.

**The question:**

Please write 200 – 400 words in **ENGLISH** about one of the following topics “describe your trip from home country to Arkansas”. Please consider the following in your answer:

- You have 20 to 30 minutes to finish the writing.
- Your writing should be in a paragraph/ essay style not points.
- Use Academic writing.
- Use 12 size font
- Double or single space.
- Consider the spelling, structure, punctuations, others.

Write here:

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Thank you very much for your participation.