

Significance of Mother Tongue influence on Saudi Female EFL Learners: a Critical Discourse Analysis

Shadma Iffat Rahmatullah

Department of English, Faculty of Language and Translation
College of Science and Arts, Khamis Mushait
King Khalid University, Abha, KSA
Email: sh_iff@yahoo.com

Abstract

The speculation, that the Saudi EFL learners with less exposure to the target language exhibit more mother tongue influence on their second language speaking, is apparent. The phonetic similarity of two languages helps EFL learners to grasp the lexical accent with the accurate articulation of the words from the second language. However, the difference in sound patterns in various languages prompts the learners to mispronounce the words more frequently. This critical study endeavors to evaluate the influential aspects of the mother tongue on the EFL learners' second language (L2) discourse. This research is carried out through a qualitative method for critical discourse analysis to answer the main question; what significant errors students make that reflect their mother tongue influence? For a comparative study, the participants are the Saudi undergraduates from multidimensional sections of female colleges in King Khalid University and the non-native English-speaking teachers from five different nations, who also manifest the influence of their mother tongue on English language speaking. Their recorded presentations and conversations were analyzed to identify the interference of their mother tongue on their English language performance. The language patterns of both students and the teachers eventually affect their English language efficiency. The significant outcome of this study reveals the possibility of the pros and cons of the mother tongue on L2 learning. The data also revealed that the inability of faculty members to produce the flawless accent of the English language has a significant effect on Saudi learners' oral performance.

Keywords: Discourse analysis, interlingual errors, mother tongue influence, non-native teachers, Saudi EFL learners

Cite as: Rahmatullah, S. I. (2020). Significance of Mother Tongue influence on Saudi Female EFL Learners: a Critical Discourse Analysis. *Arab World English Journal(AWEJ)*. Proceedings of 2nd MEC TESOLConference 2020:329-342.

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/MEC2.24>

Introduction

One of the four language skills, the speaking skill for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners is a most remarkable, hence considered as a productive skill. The undergraduate colleges of Saudi Arabia may provide EFL learners with more exposure to English languages (L2), considering the fact that approximately 20-40% of the teaching faculty constitutes non-native foreign teachers. In other circumstances, where most of the teachers are Arabic speakers, the students experience less exposure to the English language.

The prevailing situation of Arab students in many Saudi Universities, studying the English language, or studying other courses with English as a medium of instruction, is crucial and pathetic. Speaking proficiency inevitably involves accuracy in pronunciation, proper use of vocabulary, and correct grammar. Accuracy in speaking is preferential by many as compared to language fluency. Nevertheless, the excessive use of pauses, stammering, repeated filler words or showing hesitation while speaking L2 may worsen their oral performance. It is difficult for Arabic speaking learners to substitute Arabic equivalents for English vowels because of minimal vowels in Arabic alphabets. The misarticulating of vowel sounds is primarily due to their first (native) language on L2 learning. It can be inferred from the discrepancies between Arabic and English languages that the Arab students “may not produce some English stops accurately, especially regarding the aspiration or voicing” (Abdelaal, 2017, p.8).

This research is based on discourse analysis to figure out the number of errors made by Saudi students in their English language speech. It also proposes to examine the consequences of excessive use of the native language (L1) for classroom instructions and the interaction between teacher-students and student-student, as well as to measure the negative impact of MT on their oral proficiency. It could be due to the learners’ mother tongue influence or the teachers’ native language accent on their English language speaking, or the least interaction between teacher and students, that causes the low proficiency of English speakers. The problem that the Saudi learners have to deal with in the English language speaking is having the least exposure to the target language. Usually, the students prefer to communicate in the Arabic language (L1) with their peers and with their native teachers. Simultaneously, while communicating with the non-native foreign teachers whose native language is one other than English, they find themselves unable to articulate in L2 with the fear of committing mistakes. Often, in such situations, they either try to avoid any interaction or take someone with them as a translator. In their struggle to communicate in the English language, practically, the majority of them speak incoherently using both L1 and L2.

It appears that they strive to translate the words from Arabic to the English language to express their ideas and thoughts. The underperformance of the learners’ oral proficiency in the English language can be attributed, in one way or another, to numerous factors. One of those apparent factors is the excessive use and influence of their mother tongue during their learning process. At this point, the language teachers have to guide the learners, hence being facilitators. It is uncertain whether the instructors, using the English language as the only medium of instruction, have to be English native speakers to put more influence on their language skills. As the students have more interaction with the teachers and their peers during their learning process in schools and colleges, they adopt what they receive. Therefore, the spoken language competence of the concerned teachers also influences students’ oral L2 proficiency.

There have been numerous studies conducted in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) in particular. These research studies on second language learning help to diagnose the errors made by ESL/EFL learners. They also help teachers to evaluate and find out the possible solutions for the improvement of their L2 proficiency. Though a significant part of these researches carried out on the use of mother tongue by Arab students are demonstrated from the teachers' perspectives. The purpose of this analytical research is to explore the influential aspect of mother tongue on English language speaking, examine the extent of influence of the mother tongue on the EFL learners' speaking performance, and figure out the types of errors that students make while speaking in the English language in or outside the classrooms. It is hypothesized that the excessive use of mother tongue in EFL classrooms and Saudi students' in-campus communication does affect their L2 oral proficiency. It is also presumed that the factors that influence the Saudi students' low performance in English-speaking might vary according to their learning environment and the amount of language exposure. The proposed study strives to answer the following questions:

- How does the mother tongue influence Saudi EFL learners' oral performance in the English language?
- What are the types of errors they usually make in English language speaking?
- What could be the influential factors that have adverse effects on their English language speaking?
- Does the English language proficiency of non-native teachers affect the learners' oral performance?

Literature Review

After reviewing the previous studies, it had been established that EFL learners have to face language learning issues with the profound effect of their mother tongue. The L1 of the students, which influences the acquisition of the L2 in several divergent situations, may have different phonological and morphological systems. These *differences* between the L1 and L2 may depend on the intensity of *resemblance* between the two languages (Al-Busaidi & Al-Saqqaf, 2015). The sound pattern of both languages may differ. Arabic, being a phonetic language, has the same pronunciation as it is written or spelled, does not create confusion in the English language, as many English words are not pronounced the way it is spelled. Most Saudi EFL learners' pronunciation errors are the outcome of "their phonetic and phonological misperception and shallow relevant awareness" (Al-Rubaat & AlShammari, 2020, p. 64).

Sources of Errors in Learners' L2 Oral performance

Being conversant in multiple languages somehow gives an individual some additional advantages in many spheres of his life. Language acquisition processes involve many factors, in particular, the cognitive, social, and linguistic aspects of learning. In the words of Dijk (1995), "Discourse is not limited to verbal action but also involves meaning, interpretation, and understanding" (p.21). It is essential to identify speech errors to analyze the language skills of L2 learners. The interference of L1 on learning of L2 is termed as the transfer errors, or *interlingual* errors (Ridha, 2012). The *interlingual* error "results from language transfer, which is caused by the learner's native language" (Rong, 2019, p.1091). Students commit mistakes from language transfer. It is only due to their native languages' interference, besides several other factors such as

students' "personal characteristics and environmental factors" (Alahmadi 2014, p.85) that influence the language learning process and "can be counted as the main sources of error production" (p.85).

The influence of the mother tongue can be both boon and bane for learners. Likewise, the effect of L1 on L2 learning can be both positive and negative. Xhemaili (2017) clarified the complimentary transfer of L1 to L2 as "positive transfer occurs when the meaning of items that are transferred is in line with the native speakers' notion of acceptability" (p.8). Contrarily, the negative transfer of language predominantly results in speaking errors. Unable to apprehend the differences between the two languages, the L2 learners conventionally make errors while pronouncing the words in the English language the way it is written or spelled. It usually occurs when the learner's native language does not have any linguistic similarity; hence there are chances of negative transfer, thus, committing more errors.

Fundamentally, the present investigation is associated with the *interlingual* errors, resulted from the influence of learners' native language or the mother tongue on their learning of L2. In learning a second language, the learners deal with many challenges while giving an effectual output through speaking skills. Usually, they lack the confidence to speak in public or with many audiences, with a lack of vocabulary or grammar knowledge. Analyzing Saudi students' grammatical errors, Alahmadi (2014) reported that quite a few errors were "assumed the result of language transfer and the transference of some Arabic elements to the English language". On the other hand, Nisa (2018) in her study on EFL Indonesian students highlighted some salient errors with the influence of mother tongue.

Another source of errors that are found in their speech is *intralingual* errors that resulted from inadequate practice and erroneous perception of language. Contrary to this, the *interlingual* errors are committed from the mother tongue influence (Rong, 2019). Such kind of errors includes the wrong pronunciation, incoherent sentences, and the incorrect use of the subject-verb agreement, etc. In a similar study conducted on the students of King Khalid University, Al-Tamari (2019) reported the same categories of errors committed by the participants. All these errors included both *interlingual* and *intralingual* errors. The *intralingual* errors found in their L2 speaking may relate to several factors, and the lack of exposure to L2 is one of them. There are wider differences between the learners' L1 (Arabic) and L2 (English). Therefore, they tend to face challenges in acquiring the target language accurately and they are more likely to experience major obstacles (Alzenaidi & Abdel Latif, 2019). Another *interlingual* error found in their L2 speaking is the misuse of definite articles with proper nouns. In the Arabic language, there is no article system except the article *al* (ال) that represents the definite article "the" in the English language (Al-Qadi, 2019; Thyab, 2016). The incorrect use of the definite article "the" is related to the fact that "Arabic speaking learners overuse the definite article "al" in their Arabic discourse even with some proper nouns which unreasonably affects their English production" (Al-Qadi, 2017, p. 73). In another study conducted on the students of King Khalid University, Al-Badawi (2012) reviewed the oral performances of students in the form of an interview. He found some phonetic errors in which a majority of his participants "substituted the voiced bilabial /b/ for the bilabial voiceless /p/ in the initial position while a lower percentage substituted it in the medial position" (p.537).

One of the leading factors of EFL learners' speaking problems is their attitude towards learning the target language and their low motivation (Naser & Hamzah, 2018). It is observed that Saudi students adopt native-like accents and intonation more quickly than learners from other nations. According to the study result of Shen and Chiu (2019), "the successful learners put less focus on using memorized expressions because they might believe if they could speak with near native-like intonation and pronunciation, they would feel more proud and become more confident to communicate with other people" (p.99). As with the many Arab university cases, Al-Busaidi and Al-saqqaf (2015) pointed out that the linguistic input of learners is limited to the classroom. Therefore, they get the least exposure to L2. Similarly, Alzamil (2019) reports in his study outcomes with participants' inclination towards using the Arabic language within a major part of their conversation with their teachers.

Teachers' Contribution to Students' L2 speaking Skill

Identifying the errors and rectifying them exclusively lies on the shoulder of the language instructors, who are responsible for correcting them and for letting the learners be aware of their mistakes. It can be assumed that with the teachers' vigilant monitoring of students' oral communication, many of the errors can be resolved at the preliminary levels of their graduation program. A practical and conducive learning environment in the classroom provides students with fruitful interaction between teachers and students, and the classroom presentations help develop their speaking skills (Yimam, 2019).

It is speculated that the teachers do not usually provide enough time for interaction with students. The students' attitude towards L2 acquisition exhibits the unfortunate reality of the teaching-learning process. Findings from the study of Soomro and Farooq (2018) tell that "teachers don't quite often utilize important strategies such as designing good speaking activities, utilizing learner-centered approach and sparing enough time for ample speaking practice"(p. 323).

Indeed, the teachers are the source of information for the learners in the classrooms. They are seen as a medium through which the learners expect to learn something. Burdened with several responsibilities, the teachers need to implement effective strategies in the classroom. The instruction and teaching techniques used in the institution are more considerable and more emphasized. However, the medium of instruction that needs to be of more consideration is neglected in general. To be bilingual in the classroom with more usage of the native language, for the convenience of students that make the content understandable for them, is disadvantageous for them. Given the opportunity, the students prefer to communicate in their native language as they feel more comfortable and can express more effectively. A higher proportion of students tend to respond in their native language while communicating with the non-native teachers, in fear of making mistakes as well as to avoid the embarrassment.

One of the critical aspects of speech, the English pronunciation of the EFL learner is affected by the native accent. Teachers who are inefficient in phonological awareness often lead to ineffective teaching. In certain scenarios, the responsibility of the learner's language learning deficiency is attributed to the teachers (Vančová, 2019). Specifically, the teachers who are subjected to teach applied linguistics can have a better knowledge of phonemes and morphemes articulation. However, a handful of non-native teachers with specialties in various other subjects

use English as a medium of instruction mixed with their mother tongue accents. According to Ahmad et al. (2018), the bilingual method of instruction could motivate EFL students with low proficiency. However, it could be partially agreed upon the fact that the use of L1 may support the students' learning at an earlier stage.

Native and Non-Native Teachers' Language Influence on Students L2 Proficiency

Regarding the speakers' distinct accents, their mother tongues play a significant role. People demonstrate varied accents due to the impact of their personal and social backgrounds. Subsequently, it leads to social discrimination among L2 learners. Though, the cultural setting of learners or non-native instructors makes a good impact on acquiring one's second language, be it the English language. However, many a time, this poor articulation in a foreign language results in socio-cultural discrimination among L2 learners. Substantially, the learning environment with the learners' socio-cultural circumstances affects the output of their language acquisition. Yusuf (2019) observed in his study that "differences in segmental and prosodic features of English spoken by different groups of speakers" (p.339) give rise to inaccuracy in pronunciation of non-native English speakers. Dealing with the non-native speakers' varied accents, Poblete et al. (2017) expressed that it clarifies the fact that how people generate language variations revealing their "social identity and a sense of belonging to a particular group of speaker or region" (p.109).

Notwithstanding the students' language learning competence, Arabic speaking native teachers use their first language to explain the texts for students' convenience. They hardly provide feedback on students' oral performance. To focus on the students' language development, it is mandatory on the teachers' part to be restricted to the target language to provide more exposure to L2. The learning process should also include identifying the mistakes, analyzing them, and finding techniques to tackle such problems. On the contrary, the non-native teachers using the English language as a medium of instruction display incorrect pronunciation and their native English accent with the influence of their mother tongue.

Does the teaching efficiency or the language proficiency of non-native English speaking teachers affect the EFL learners' overall performance in language acquisition? Ismaiel (2017) found some discrepancies between native English teachers and non-native English speaking teachers. He observed that using Arabic words in teachers' L2 discourse with students makes the latter more comfortable though affecting their motivation level for L2 practice.

The oral performance of students' L2 inside or outside the classroom is somehow related to the teaching-learning process. Accordingly, the teachers play a substantial role in the learners' achievement. Furthermore, increasing the teacher-student interaction enhances the latter's language efficiency if the language used in communication is the learner's target language. According to Abdul Qadeer (2019), Native English teachers are somewhat devoted to teaching and equally "sympathetic to students' cognitive process of acquiring skill or knowledge, whereas NNESTs are stricter and have more realistic expectations of students' learning" (p.140).

Pedagogy and the Second Language learning

One of the several effective pedagogical techniques used in the classroom is *dialogical* teaching. Enhancing the EFL learners' speaking skills, Elhassan & Adam (2017) discussed the impact of *dialogic* teaching in the classroom. In their research, they stated that "this type of

teaching maximizes students' talking time which in turn enhances their speaking skills” (p.60). The utilization of more dialogues in the classroom may develop the learners’ critical thinking and problem-solving skills as they are supposed to be passionately involved in interactive activities with their peers and their teachers.

In the EFL context, teaching speaking skills through the direct method is quite challenging as it does not require the use of the learner’s mother tongue. In such instances, the teachers must possess a mastery of the target language (Williyan, 2019). When there is the least exposure to the target language, the teachers usually apply the bilingual medium of instruction. Hence, both L1 & L2 are “*interdependent* and *nurture* each other whenever the individual’s mother tongues are permitted in the educational environment” (Suliman, 2014, p.358).

Often in a conversation, the native language (L1) speakers strive to spontaneously translate their thoughts into the English language (L2). In this attempt, the errors they usually make are the inappropriate use of grammar while constructing sentences, reflecting the primary influence of their mother tongue (Abdul-Rahman, 2017). In his study on the English language learning by *Tamil* speakers, Abdul-Rahman (2017) further clarifies that the “direct translations are seen everywhere in their use where the errors are bounded to mother tongue (p.676)”. In Arabic speaking, the word to word translation is more unlikely in learning the English language, with the differences in the grammatical rules in both languages. For any language learning, the grammatical rules cannot be ignored. With the absence of appropriate syntactical patterns, the sentence appears meaningless. The rules and practices of the two languages might be different; hence, the effect of L1 is evident on the transfer of L2. Al-Busaidi and Al-Saqqaf (2015) express in their research that “When transliterating from one language to another, we should note that the rules that govern the correspondence between letters and sounds in the source language should not necessarily be the same in the target language” (p. 183).

The mother tongue of a person is his first language (L1) to which he is exposed since his birth. With the least exposure to L2, the impact of the learner’s first language becomes much stronger with heavy influence on L2 learning. Though the L1 of a learner helps in the acquisition of the L2, it also has a negative effect on the learner’s L2 performance with its excessive use in several situations. One of the grammatical errors found in their speech is the misuse of the third person pronouns (he, she, it) while referring to the specific gender. Another mistake is in the form of third-person possessive pronouns (his, her, and its) besides other syntactical errors (Alahmadi, 2014).

Methods

Participants

The leading participants are a hundred female Saudi undergraduates studying various courses in one of the female colleges of King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia. The mean age of participant students is 21. The study levels of participants vary between level-one to level-eight. These students belong to different departments: English, Computer science, Information technology, management system, Islamic Studies, and Public health.

Besides, twenty-five faculty members from different departments of different Asian nationalities participated in the study to respond to a questionnaire.

Research Design

The study aimed to investigate the significant factors that influence students' oral English language performance, specifically the influence of one's mother tongue. To identify the major errors that were resulted from their L1 impact, the qualitative approach is followed. The data for this discourse analysis is collected from three resources: (1) the recorded presentations submitted by the students from levels five to eight of the graduation program as their summative assessment; (2) the observational study carried out on students of all upper-levels during two semesters; and (3) the perception of the teachers regarding students' English speaking performance received through a survey questionnaire. The obtained qualitative data were represented in descriptive information with the mean value of errors found in their oral performances.

The questionnaire

The questionnaire was employed to get the responses of faculty members on their perception of Saudi students' oral performance in L2 during their interaction with students and their conscious observations on students' classroom verbal participation.

Recorded Presentations

The study sample from students consists of their recorded presentations submitted prior to the final examination as the summative assessment from the English department (60 recordings) is separated from other departments (40 recordings) to make a comparative study to evaluate their language performance. The total number of recorded presentations collected from different departments is 100. The duration of the recorded presentation is five-ten minutes. Other than the recorded presentations, the researcher recorded the conversations between her and the students during their online interactions.

Recorded Interviews

Besides, for a comparative study, the institution's non-native teachers' oral English language proficiency is assessed through recorded interviews. These non-native teachers belong to nations like India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sudan, and Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. The recordings comprise the casual conversations and some discussions between the researcher and the sample participants. These recordings are kept highly confidential on personal grounds.

Results and Findings

The analytical data collected from these recordings reveal that the significant errors the students made in L2 speaking are the incorrect pronunciation of even two-syllable words and incomplete sentences. However, these recordings do not represent accurate data as most of the presentations are based on online readings.

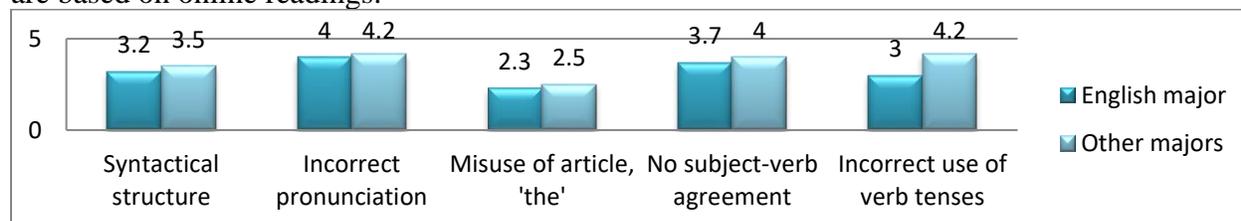


Figure 1. Significant Errors in Students' L2 oral presentations

The data depicted in figure-one is gathered from the students' discourse in the form of recorded presentations as a part of their summative assessment process. Among various errors the students committed in their English language speaking, only five major types of errors are displayed in figure one. One of them is the incorrect use of verb tenses by students with an English major (M=3) lesser than those with other majors (M=4.2). It is evident that the major errors made in their sentence structures are of subject-verb agreement (M=3.7/M=4) and in pronouncing the words incorrectly (M=4/M=4.2). The least number of errors we find is the misuse of definite articles with proper nouns (M=2.3/M=2.5).

If we compare the performance of students from different departments, we find that students with English made lesser mistakes in each category as compared to others. It can be speculated that students studying other courses have less interaction with the English language as they are usually taught in bilingual mode.

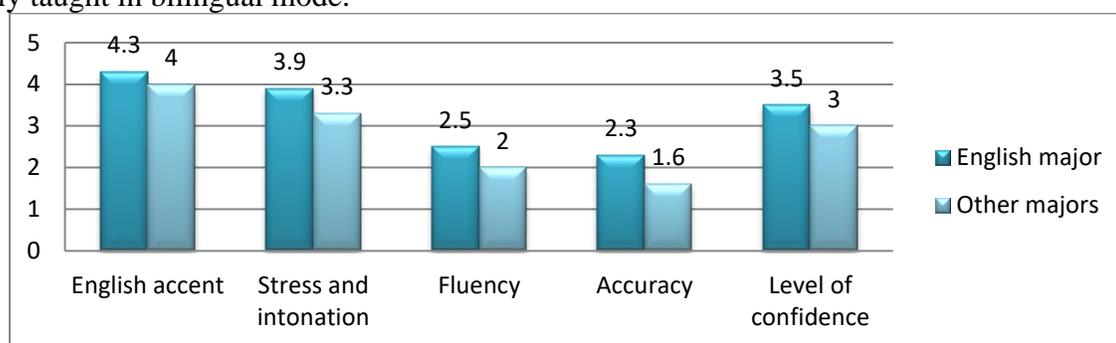


Figure-2: Teachers' perception regarding Students' L2 speaking performance

The obtained data from the questionnaire are displayed in figure-two, which reveals the students' high level of confidence (M=3.5/M=3) in speaking L2, even in mispronouncing the content words. Whereas talking about accuracy and fluency in L2, the participant teachers seem to disagree. According to the result, students have good command over word stress and intonation, and the majority of students demonstrate a native-like English accent (M=4.3/M=4).

Discussion

The focus of the study is to identify the extent of mother tongue influence on the learners' speaking performance. Therefore, the difference in students' study levels is not taken into account. While watching students' online oral presentations, it is noticed that an average of 70% of students is merely reading the slides. They are perceived to be unable to explain the content of the presentation on their own. While reading the slides, nearly 80% of them mispronounced the words (pronouncing the words as they are written phonetically.) The errors in consonants and vowels are found in almost a majority of them. To distinguish the number of pronunciation errors, the data in figure-one reflect the higher amount of errors in the pronunciation of longer words that might be correlated with their lack of listening skill or lack of practice.

Some of the consonants sounds that the students find difficult to utter are /p/ pronounced as /b/ and /j/ as /g/. Moreover, data testifies the pronunciation errors that are discovered in replacing the phonemes /p/ as /b/ (as in *process*), /v/ as /b/ (as in *book*) etc., and inserting extra vowels in *learn*

pronouncing as /lɪərɪn/ instead of /lə:n/ /, and *against* as /ageinisit/ instead of /ə'geɪnst/, and so on. Besides, the phoneme /i/ in *live* (verb) is pronounced as /lɪɪv/, and *finite* as /finit/ instead of /'fɪɪnɪt/ by nearly majority of them. Such type of errors is committed by students more frequently from almost all levels. Furthermore, around 40% of them omitted a part of words, particularly a cluster of consonants and vowel sounds to generate their pronunciation, only to make their speech appear fluent and native-like.

The *observational study* reveals that students prefer to communicate in their native language. However, they begin their communication in L2 and soon come back to L1 to express their point of view. For classroom presentations, they struggle to memorize the content of the slides or practice to read the slides efficiently. On the contrary, in discussing a topic in the classroom they find themselves in trouble as they either lack the vocabulary or feel hesitant in uttering more than two and three sentences coherently. A similar observation is located in the study of Soomro and Farooq (2018).

The study is carried out on the Saudi students whose mother tongue is Arabic (a phonetic language that is spoken as it is written). Some of the factors that are related to the pronunciation issues can be attributed to the inability to follow the proper stress and intonation besides the changes in the articulation of some consonants and vowels. The errors cannot be predicted as it varies according to students learning aptitude. Correspondingly, analyzing the pronunciation errors among Saudi students, Alzinaidi and Abdel Latif (2019) discussed the causes of errors and related one of those causes to their inadequacy in awareness building while pronouncing the morphemes –s and –ed. In pronouncing the consonant clusters, the participants usually insert a short vowel that makes it sound awkward, illustrating with the pronunciation of the word "terms" [tɜrmz] as [tɜrmɪz] or [tɜrɪmz].

Contrary to the pronunciation errors, the errors found in the form of the subject-verb agreement, misuse of plural –s with the singular third person, and inappropriate use of verb tenses show the negative influence of students' L1, as evident in other studies (Alahmadi, 2014; Nisa, 2018). Also, the data shows so many pauses taken by students during their presentations. In this context, such errors as using too many pauses in a sentence or inserting the repeated filler words illustrate the learners' inefficiency in speaking L2.

Regarding the English language accent, the students outdo the English language competence of non-native teachers. The Saudi students exhibit skilled performances in the English accent rather than their language instructors who have a mix of their mother tongue accents. However, it cannot be ascertained that the imperfect language performance of non-native teachers does affect the successful L2 oral performance of Saudi students. These non-native teachers rarely use *diphthongs* to pronounce the vowel sounds and stressing more on consonants such as voiced and voiceless plosives, particularly /d/, /p/, /t/, and /k/. Being inefficient in articulating L2 with appropriate stress and intonations, they are more likely to pronounce the words erroneously. It reflects the significant influence of their mother tongue on their second language discourse. However, the study ascertained that the language proficiency of Non-native English speaking teachers does not affect the students' learning achievement, though somewhat it may cause the learners' language development. To support this idea, Abdul Qadeer (2019) in his major findings verified the learners'

favoritism for Native English speaking teachers with the notion that they are more efficient than Non-native English teachers. At the same time, students disclosed their preferences for the latter for their improved academic achievement.

At the preparatory levels of all the graduate programs at the concerned university, the students are offered to learn all the four basic language skills to prepare them for using the English language as the medium of interaction at a later stage. Being unable to communicate effectively in the English language, the students showed a lack of basic knowledge of the L2 and a lack of motivation to learn. Though the students exhibited more confidence while speaking, they committed more *intralingual* errors than *interlingual* errors.

As perceived by the researchers, the Arabic speaking students do have difficulty in producing the sound /p/, as justified by Abdelaal (2017). However, the present result reveals the missing of the /p/ phoneme in many of the participants' speech, and the concerned sound is replaced by /b/ while uttering the words such as happy as 'habby,' park as 'bark,' PowerPoint as 'borpoint' etc. Such errors might occur due to the native language's interference as the phoneme/p/ is not found in the Arabic alphabets; hence the students put more effort into producing this sound. Similar phonetic errors were identified by Al-Badawi (2012) in his study on King Khalid University students.

It is contemplated that without an understanding of some English words, the learners tend to memorize the content without realizing the use of words in their real contexts. The majority of students are observed to be focusing more on fluency than accuracy, while those with good L2 proficiency struggle to maintain more accuracy than concentrate on fluency to make their speech efficient and successful. They would like to emphasize using correct grammar, proper intonation, and accurate pronunciation (Shen, 2019).

With limited language input, the students exhibit the fear of making errors while speaking the target language. It is ascertained that students who take more opportunities to speak in L2 by interacting with their peers or teachers and participating zealously in classroom activities are more likely to improve their oral language proficiency. Eventually, the research hypothesizes that the students' L2 oral performances immensely reflect the L1 influence, and that is due to their hesitance in conversing in L2 are proved to be true. In addition, their disinclination towards practicing the language in the classrooms is one of the hypothesized influencing factors.

Conclusion

The present discourse analysis acknowledges the influence of mother tongue on their L2 speaking performance. The complexities of syntactical learning make the Saudi learners inattentive and unconcerned towards L2 acquisition. The data analysis demonstrates that the students committed both *interlingual* and *intralingual* errors equivalently. Moreover, the sample recordings manifest the incoherent speech of students in L2 produces meaningless communication. To overcome these errors and attain the required learning outcomes, frequent interaction between peers and teachers is essential for L2 learners. It is a possible way to gain more opportunities to enhance their language skills. Another possible way to overcome the language obstacles that come in the learners' lack of exposure to the second language is to be monolingual in the entire institution

campus unless required to use the native language. It is justifiable for teachers to discourage students from using their mother tongue in classrooms if the subjects they are studying are to be taught in the English language. It is evident that the excessive usage of the English language by the native or non-native teachers, inside or outside the classroom as a medium of instruction or to interact with the students, might lower the effect of mother tongue on the English language speaking.

With the non-availability of native English speakers, the researcher couldn't compare the effect of native and non-native English accents of teachers on students learning. It is also noticeable that the learners' perception of their non-native English teachers varies depending on their favored attitudes.

About the author

Dr. Shadma Iffat Rahmatullah is an assistant professor at King Khalid University, Abha, KSA. She has been teaching Saudi female undergraduates for ten years at the faculty of Language and Translation. Her research interests include literature and language studies, educational technology, educational psychology, and pedagogical development. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9325-9921>

References

- Abdelaal, N. M. (2017). Instrumental Analysis of the English Stops Produced by Arabic Speakers of English, *International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies*, 5(3), 8-15. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.5n.3p.8>
- Abdul Qadeer, A. (2019). Saudi EFL Learners' Perceptions about the Teaching of English by Native and Non-native English Teacher, *Arab World English Journal, Special Issue: The Dynamics of EFL in Saudi Arabia*, 137-153. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/efl1.11>
- Abdul-Rahman, M. M. (2017). A Study of Mother Tongue Influence on Learning English as a Second Language by Tamil Speaking Students. *Proceedings of 7th International Symposium, SEUSL*, 667-689.
- Ahmad, I., Radzuan, N, R. M., & Hussain, M.S. (2018). Use of First Language in the Classroom: Non-native EFL Teachers' Beliefs in Teaching English to Adult Learners in Bilingual Context, *Arab World English Journal*, 9 (2). DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol9no2.13>
- Alahmadi, N. S. (2014). Errors Analysis: A Case Study of Saudi Learner's English Grammatical Speaking Errors, *Arab World English Journal*, (4), 84-98.
- Al-Badawi, K. (2012). An Analysis of Phonetic, Morphological and Syntactic Errors in English: A Case Study of Saudi BA Students at King Khalid University, *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, 2(6), 536-538. DOI: 10.7763/IJSSH.2012.V2.165
- Al-Busaidi, S.,& Al-Saqqaf, A. H. (2015). English Spelling Errors Made by Arabic-Speaking Students, *English Language Teaching*, 8(7), 188-191 <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/elt.v8n7p181>

- Al-Qadi, M. M. (2017). English Article System Errors among Saudi Arab EFL Learners: A Case of the Preparatory Year English Program Learners of King Saud University, *International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies*, 5(1), 69-77.
- Al-Rubaat, A., & Alshammari, H. A. (2020). Analysis of Phonetic and Phonological Constraints of Saudi EFL Learners, *English Language Teaching*, 13(1), 63-72. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v13n1p62>
- Al-Tamari, E. A. (2019). Analyzing Speaking Errors Made by EFL Saudi University Students. *Arab World English Journal, Special Issue: The Dynamics of EFL in Saudi Arabia*, 56-69. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/aweje/efl1.5>
- Alzamil, A. (2019). The Effects of the Use of First Language on Learning English as a Second Language: Attitudes of Arabic EFL Learners. *Arab World English Journal*, 10 (3) 192-201. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/aweje/vol10no3.13>
- Alzinaidi, M. H., & Abdel Latif, M. M. M. (2019). Diagnosing Saudi Students' English Consonant Pronunciation Errors, *Arab World English Journal*, 10 (4), 180- 193. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/aweje/vol10no4.14>
- Dijk, T. A. (1997). Aims of Critical Discourse Analysis, *Japanese Discourse*, 1, 17-27.
- Elhassan, I. B. M., & Adam, M. I. (2017). The Impact of Dialogic Teaching on English Language Learners' speaking and Thinking Skills. *Arab World English Journal*, Vol. 8(4). DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/aweje/vol8no4.4>
- Ismail, N. M. (2017). Native and Non-native English Speaking Teachers' Teaching Styles and their Effect on their EFL Saudi Students' Achievement and Enjoyment of Learning English at Taif University, *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 7(6), 148-163, DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v7n6p148>
- Naser, I., & Hamzah, M. (2018). Pronunciation and Conversation Challenges among Saudi EFL Students, *JEES (Journal of English Educators Society)*, 3 (1), 85-104. <https://doi.org/10.21070/jees.v3i1.1228>
- Nisa, B. (2018). Errors Analysis: Mother Tongue Influence on Grammatical Errors in Indonesian EFL Students' Papers, *PROGRESSIVE*, 13(1), 1-6.
- Poblete, J., Gunn, N. y González, X. (2017). The Perception of Accent in Non-native Speakers of English: A Case of Identity. *Revista Akademeia*, 16 (2), 101-127. Retrieved from <http://revistas.ugm.cl/index.php/rakad/article/view/158/163>
- Ridha, N. S. A. (2012). The Effect of EFL Learners' Mother Tongue on their Writings in English: An Error Analysis Study, *Journal of the College of Arts*, (60), 22-45.
- Rong, D. (2019). Interlingual Transfer and Intralingual Transfer —Two Most Important Sources of Errors in Interlanguage. *International Conference on Arts, Management, Education and Innovation (ICAMEI 2019)*, 1090-1093.
- Shen, M., & Chiu, T. (2019). EFL Learners' English Speaking Difficulties and Strategy Use, *Education and Linguistics Research*, 5(2), 88-102. <https://doi.org/10.5296/elr.v5i2.15333>
- Soomro, A., & Farooq, M. (2018). EFL Learners' Attitude towards Developing Speaking Skills at the University of Taif, Saudi Arabia, *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 8(3), 318-327. <http://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v8n3p318>
- Suliman, A. (2014). The Interference of Mother Tongue/Native Language in One's English Language Speech Production. *International Journal of English and Education*, 3(3), 356-366.

- Thyab, R. A. (2016). Mother-Tongue Interference in the Acquisition of English Articles by L1 Arabic Students, *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(3), 1-4.
- Vančová, H. (2019). Current Issues in Pronunciation Teaching to Non-Native Learners of English, *Journal of Language and Cultural Education*, 7(2), 140-155. DOI: 10.2478/jolace-2019-0015
- Williyan, A. (2019). Teaching Speaking: Exploring Method of Teaching And Oral Corrective Feedback In EFL Learners' Classroom, *J-ELLiT (Journal of English Language, Literature, and Teaching)*, 3(2), 46-52.
- Xhemaili, M. (2017). The Influence of Mother Tongue (Albanian) in Learning and Teaching EFL, *THESIS*, 6(2), 3-21.
- Yimam, A. T. (2019). An Assessment of Factors That Affect Students Speaking Skill The Case of First-Year English Major Students at Debre Markos University. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 9(17), 1-7. DOI: 10.7176/RHSS/9-17-01
- Yusuf, Y. Q. (2019). Non-Native English Teachers and Varieties of English: Ready, or Not? *Edukasi: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pengajaran*, Vol. 6(2), 334-341. DOI: [10.19109/ejpp.v6i2.3913](https://doi.org/10.19109/ejpp.v6i2.3913)