# Some Aspects of Fossilization in Interlanguage Arab Speakers of English

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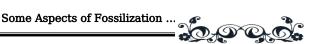
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# ABSTRACT

The present paper has two fold aim. First, it sheds light on the nature of fossilization , its main sources and causes , and ways of avoiding it.  Second , it examines some examples of fossilization drawn from students' oral performance. The data of the study are drawn from students' oral performance while communicating with their EFL teachers; the data are  based on actual observation while attending classes with teachers of English. The problem of this study rises from the fact that teachers of English in most cases know the pronunciation and grammatical rules of English, but when they come to the actual experience of expressing themselves or explaining certain ideas in English, they sometimes violate the rules and  speak broken English. So do the students who seem to understand the grammatical points they have learnt, yet they commit the same errors in their written and  spoken English. This observation motivated  the author to examine this problem.

**Key words**: fossilization, interlanguage, Arab speakers, errors, communication

# 1. <u>Introduction</u>

In general, most scholars agree that the field of second language acquisition (SLA) began in 1967 with Corder's influential article "The significance of learners' errors". However, Selinker (1991) assumes that non-native speaking students do not learn how to produce second language; instead they tend to develop interlanguage (IL) in particular contexts.

Research in second/foreign language learning has documented a variety of factors which affect the success with which a language learner will master the target language (TL). These factors may relate to characteristics of the leaner such as attitudes, motivation in addition to personality variables such as inhibition, risk-taking, empathy, introversion and extroversion, or may relate to characteristics of the language situation such as length of exposure to the language and the teaching method employed (Bialystok, 1981; Ellis 1986). Gardner and Lambert's (1972) research on attitude and motivation pointed to the importance of affective factors. Other researchers (e.g., Schumann, 1976; 1978) have pointed to the influence of social factors which determine the extent to which a non-native speaker group may remain 'socially distant' from the culture of the TL group.

## 2. <u>Literature Review</u>

While a considerable amount of second language acquisition (SLA) research has focused on the acquisition process itself, another type of research has specialized in investigating the fossilization of specific linguistic features. In this review, a thorough investigation of fossilization, its causes and sources will be given. The difference between acquisition and learning will be tackled. A thorough
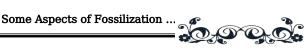
discussion to second language acquisition will also be given. Moreover, the two related concepts, i.e. interlanguage and approximative system will be discussed.

## 2.1. Acquisition and Learning

Writers did not agree on a specific definition of 'acquisition' and 'learning'. Some writers differentiate between these two terms (e.g., Bley - Vorman, 1989; Krashen, 1975; 1977; 1981a; 1981b; 1982; Krashen et al. 1977; Yule, 1985). Other writers use them interchangeably, (e.g., Dulay, H., Burt, M. & Krashen, S. 1982; Ellis, 1986; Hatch, 1978; Ritchie, 1978). No doubt that researchers in language acquisition are well aware that acquisition of one's native language is normally a natural process whereas the acquisition of one's second language is often a difficult and only partially a successful process.

In discussing the 'Acquisition- Learning Hypothesis', Krashen (1985) maintains that adult second language learners have at their disposal two distinct and independent ways of developing competence in a second language acquisition, which is a "subconscious process identical in all important ways to the process children utilize in acquiring their first language "(p.1) and learning which is" a conscious process that results in 'knowing about' language" (p.1). To Krashen (1981b), "acquisition requires meaningful and communicative use of the target language" (p.98). In addition, Krashen (1981a) connects fluency with acquisition. He states that fluency in second language performance is due to "what we have acquired, not what we have learned" (p.99). In describing the Monitor Model, Krashen claims that adult second language learners have two means for internalizing the target language. The first is 'acquisition' by which he means a subconscious and intuitive process of constructing the system of a language.

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The second is 'learning' in which learners attend to form, figure out rules, and are generally aware of their own process. Furthermore, Krashen (1975; 1977; 1980) and Yule (1985) distinguishes between acquisition and learning in that acquisition is attached to unconscious, natural process that typically take place in informal settings whereas learning refers to a conscious process that typically occurs in normal classroom environments.

Ritchie (1978) uses the terms 'acquisition' and 'acquirer' rather than 'learning' and 'learner' as cover terms for both acquisition and learning. Ritchie states that an account of the capacity for language use "requires more than an account of the user's grammar and behavioral strategies. In particular, a more complete account will include a hypothesis about what has been called the user's 'communicative competence' "(p.33). Similarly, Gregg (1989) points out that acquisition of a language involves more than the acquisition of rules for the production of utterances. It involves the acquisition of knowledge, including knowledge that will never find expression in output: knowledge of ambiguity, anaphoric relations, possible versus impossible interpretations of sentences (p.18).

In addition, McLaughlin (1987: 20) argues that acquisition comes about through meaningful interaction in a natural communication setting whereby speakers are not concerned with form. On the other hand, Dulay, H., Burt, M. & Krashen, S. 1982 use the terms 'acquisition' and 'learning' interchangeably. Likewise, Hatch (1978) does not distinguish between 'learning' and 'acquisition'. In this respect, Hatch states: "Though I don't believe there is a real difference between acquisition and learning, I believe like to see what discourse analysis tells us about such behavior"

(p.433). Ellis (1986) also uses 'acquisition' and 'Learning' interchangeably irrespective of whether conscious or subconscious processes are involved.

## 2.2. Second Language and Foreign Language

Some researchers and writers have made a distinction between these two notions whereas others have not. Most of the time, "L2" is used to refer to both notions. Those who have distinguished between these two notions agree that a 'second language' is a language, which along with the mother tongue, is widely used and knowledge of which is useful in everyday life. The notion 'foreign language' has been used to refer to a language which does not play any role in the day-to-day life of a country but the knowledge of which is useful in international communication, politics, teaching, and research.

Ellis (1986) points out that second language acquisition is not intended to contrast with foreign language acquisition. Ellis states: "SLA is used as a general term that embraces both untutored (or 'naturalistic') acquisition and tutored (or 'classroom') acquisition" (p.5).

Richards (1978) points out that foreign language is "applied to a language which is studied primarily to enable one to communicate with native speakers of that language... and not for use as a common language or lingua franca"(p.5). He also points out that "English can be called a foreign language when it is studied primarily to permit communication with foreigners who are native speakers of English "(p.6). In this respect, cultural and linguistic dimensions are implied in the study of the language. Richards (1978:6) maintains that second language is widely used to apply to both English for immigrant groups and minority non-English-speaking groups within English

speaking countries; it is also used to describe the interactional functions of English in many third world countries where English has indigenized.

## 2.3. Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

The field of second language acquisition research received considerable impetus in 1967 with Corder's influential paper "The Significance of Learners' Errors" in which he suggested that although there may be differences in previous knowledge and motivation, the process of first and second language acquisition may very well be the same. He states that "given motivation, it is inevitable that a human being will learn a second language if he is exposed to the language data" (p.166). Since that time, much study of second language acquisition has been carried out with the assumption that the basic processes underlying both first and second language acquisition are the same. Recent formulations of this notion "make use of the currently evolving theory of Universal Grammar, arguing from the module-specific assumption of linguistic knowledge and arguing that adults are faced with the logical problem of language acquisition, just as children are " (Schachter, 1988:219).

During the early 1970s second language acquisition research expanded, and similarities in first and second language learner production data as well as proposals that account for the differences began to appear. Corder's original suggestion has been advocated by some recent studies in second language acquisition which have attempted to identify similarities between first and second language acquisition, e.g., Dulay and Burt (1973; 1974a & b); Fathman (1975a & b); Ervin - Tripp1973; Milon (1972). Hatch (1974), a leading researcher in children's second

language acquisition, suggests that if we believe that language is rule governed and that language acquisition is the development of the rules of the language, then it seems there must be some similarities in strategies used to acquire these rules. Other researchers (e.g. Dulay and Burt , 1974 a & b; Sampson and Richards, 1973; Tucker and d'Anglejan, 1975) have taken a similar position by suggesting that second language learning may be similar in many respects to native language acquisition and that the strategies involved in second language learning may be essentially the same as those which characterize the acquisition of a first language.

McLaughlin (1987:139) sees SLA as any other complex cognitive skill which involves the gradual integration of sub-skills as controlled processes initially predominate and then become automatic. Schumann (1978:34) considers SLA as one aspect of acculturation, and the degree to which a learner acculturates to the TL group will control the degree to which he acquires the second language. Ellis (1986:5) sees SLA as "the study of how learners learn an additional language after they have acquired their mother tongue".

## 2.4. Interlanguage (IL)

The notion of "interlanguage" (IL) was first introduced by Selinker (1972) in his widely-quoted paper, ' Interlanguage'. This concept refers to a linguistic system intermediate between the mother tongue and the TL, and the learner can construct it at any stage in his development (Corder, 1992; Romaine, 1988). The first researchers who explored the language of foreign language learners as a potential source of knowledge about second or foreign language learning are: Corder's (1971)" Idiosyncratic

dialect", Nemser's (1971) " Approximative system," and Selinker's (1972) "Interlanguage".

Selinker (1972:214) defines IL as a separate linguistic system based on the observable output, which results from a learner's attempted production of a TL. This system is a product of what Selinker calls "latent psychological structures," which are activated during the process of foreign language acquisition.

When the term IL was introduced, it was intended to suggest the intermediate stages between the NL and the TL observable in a learner's language. It was thus proposed that the data, on which theories of SLA should be based, must be the learner's real attempted communication in the second language. It follows from this that the observable data from meaningful performance situations that can be established as relevant to interlingual identification are: (1) utterances in the learner's NL produced by the learner; (2) IL utterances produced by the learner; and (3) TL utterances produced by native speakers of that TL. These three sets of utterances or behavioral events are the psychological relevant data of second-language learning (Selinker, 1972:214).

The notion of IL is defined as a system, which is intermediate between the mother tongue and the TL. This system is assumed to be independent of L1 and L2, and each system is part of a series of approximate systems, which form an interlanguage continuum (Corder, 1992; Romaine, 1988; Littlewood, 1984). IL was thought of as a universal series of interim grammars, which all learners would systematically work through as they acquired the new language. The universal process of IL would be modified by such things as first language syntax,

instruction, communication strategies, and so on. These factors could be used to explain differences found among learners, and also differences in the data of first language learners (Hatch, 1983:19).

Selinker, L., Swain, M., & Dumas, G. (1975) emphasize the systematicity of IL by maintaining that it is the main tenet of IL hypothesis that second -language speech rarely conforms to what one expects native speakers of the TL to produce. It is not an exact translation of the native language and  it differs from the TL in systematic ways. In a similar vein, Bialystok and Sharood Smith (1985) view IL as "the systematic language performance (in production and recognition of utterances) by second language learners who have not achieved sufficient levels of analysis of linguistic knowledge or control of processing to be identified completely with native speakers" (p.116).

The systematically of IL manifests itself  in many ways, including the regular suppliance and nonsuppliance of both target-like and non target-like features in certain linguistic contexts and in the persistence of the same errors for often quite lengthy periods (Sato, 1990; Schmidt, 1981). Much of the variability the IL exhibits turns out to be systematically related to such factors as task, task requirements (e.g., attention to form and planning), interlocutor and linguistic context (Crookes, 1989; Hulstjin, 1989; Kasper, 1988; Preston, 1989; Tarone, 1988).

Littlewood (1981) emphasizes the communicative function of a feature as a primary factor likely to influence variability in IL. He speculates that, if a feature was semantically redundant in a particular communicative context, it would be more likely to be omitted, but if that same feature became important to communication in another communicative context, it would be much less

likely to be omitted. Let us have a look at Nemser's "Approximative system."
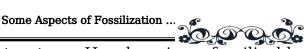
## 2.5. Approximative System

Nemser (1971) has identified "approximative system" among three language systems in accordance with their functions. These systems are: (1) the target language in which communication is being attempted. In the case of the learner, it is the language he/she is learning when he/she uses it. (2) The source language which acts as a source of interference (deviations from the norm of the TL). It is normally the learner's native language. (3) An approximative system which is the deviant linguistic system actually employed by the learner attempting to utilize the TL. Such approximate systems vary in character in accordance with proficiency level. Variation is also introduced by learning experience, communication functions, personal learning characteristics as well as other factors.

Nemser (1971) used the notion of "approximative system" nearly in the same sense of Selinker's (1972) 'interlanguage'. Nemser's notion has the advantage of implying the developing nature of language learning. It suggests that the learner's system is continually being modified as new elements are incorporated throughout the learning process. Such developing systems are evident in learner's erroneous constructions, e.g., simplified grammar, reduced inflections, and overgeneralized TL rules. Nemser notes that the attention to the content rather than the form is responsible for these deviant forms.

## 2.6. Fossilization

Selinker (1972) views fossilization as a mechanism which is assumed to exist in the latent psychological

structure. He also views fossilizable linguistic phenomena as erroneous constructions, terms , rules and subsystems which speakers of a particular native language ( N L ) will tend to keep in their IL relative to a particular target language (TL), no matter what the age of the learner or the amount of explanation and instruction he / she receives in the TL ( p.215 ) . Fossilization is latent in the brain , but could be activated wherever learners attempt to produce sentences in L2. Fossilization refers to the resistance of L2 linguistic element to approach (TL) norms regardless of the amount of evidence experienced by the learner ( Selinker,1972 ) . If the fossilizable items, rules, and subsystems which occur in IL performance are a result of the NL, then they are related to the process of language transfer. If they are a result of an identifiable approach by the learner to the material to be learned, then they are related to strategies of L2 learning. But if they are a result of an identifiable approach by the learner to communicate with the native speaker of TL, then they are related to strategies of L2 communication (Selinker, 1972:216-217).

According to Bley –Vorman ( 1989 : 46-47),  foreign language learners reach a certain stage of learning which is the stage of short success; learners then "stabilize" at this stage. When the learner "backslides" to the stable stage , then he / she is described to pass through fossilization. A learner is expected to progress further along the learning continuum , so that his IL moves closer to the TL system and contains fewer and fewer errors. However , some errors will probably never disappear entirely. " Such errors are often described as fossilized, meaning that they have become permanent features of the learner's speech " ( Littlewood, 1984 : 44 ) . Obvious examples are the pronunciation errors which form part of

"foreign accent" retained by most adult learners. Littlewood suggests that fossilization is most likely to occur when a learner realizes ( subconsciously ) that the error does not hinder him from satisfying his communicative need.

According to some error analysis (EA) theorists (e.g., Corder, 1978), fossilization constitutes one form of learners' adjustment among several communication strategies (CSs) in that the satisfied learners 'fossilize' unproblematic features, the frustrated learners 'adjust' their messages by refusing interaction and avoiding certain structures; whereas, the communicating learners use 'resource expansion' strategies such as paraphrase. In this vein, Abunawas (1999) conducted a study on the use of communication strategies whereby he studied the affective factors that influence the use and implementation of CSs by EFL learners; he cited several erroneous examples drawn from the corpus of the study and he concluded that learners of high motivation, positive attitudes, high self esteem, and less anxiety tend to use achievement communication strategies; one of which is paraphrase. He also found out that learners of low motivation, negative attitudes, low self esteem, and high anxiety tend to use reduction communication strategies; one of which is avoidance.

Han and Odlin (2006) , following Han (2004), argue that every interlanguage encompasses both success and failure. There will inevitably be aspects of the L2 which have fossilized as well as those which are native like or still developing (p. 9, 12). It follows from this claim that L2 learners can never attain truly native proficiency, and, also, that fossilization must only apply locally as opposed to globally (pp. 8-9).

Selinker (1991) points out that fossilization is a term used to "cover the complex phenomenon of the cessation of IL learning often far from TL norms" (p.29). It is what appears to make second language different from the first.

Han (2009) introduced the Selective Fossilization Hypothesis (SFH) which is an analytic model that seeks to account for both the acquisition aspects  and fossilizable potential of linguistic features. According to Chen ( 2009), this model is a unique  attempt to make sense of fossilizable forms by probing into factors purportedly promoting fossilization in the acquisition process.

It is generally believed that learners with strong motivation, ample exposure to rich second language (L2) input, and plentiful opportunities for output will likely acquire a second language. However, as promising as this idea may seem, this is not often the case in post-pubertal L2 acquisition. Researchers (e.g., Long, 1997) has suggested that even in situations where plenty of motivation and opportunities for practice are available, most language learners never reach target-like proficiency, and their interlanguage is prone to fossilization, meaning that learners are unable to acquire certain features in target-like forms. Why is it that L2 learners at various stages (i.e., initial, developmental, and end-state) are able to provide accurate production of some L2 features, while these same learners show variable, yet systematic, use of others?

According to the Selective Fossilization Hypothesis (Han, 2009), it is the interaction of first language (L1) markedness and L2 input robustness taking place in the learner's mind that determines how acquirable or fossilizable certain linguistic features will be. According to Han, the L1 serves as "the source language that provides the initial building materials to be gradually blended with

materials taken from the TL" (p. 137), and it is this interaction that subsequently results in the selective restructuring of the L2 grammar. During the process of conceptual restructuring from the L1 to the L2, L2 input is likely to be modulated by L1 interference or influence through the L1-based semantic and conceptual system. This interference from the learners' native language is one of the main causal factors of fossilization.

While morphosyntactic features have been the core interest of most fossilization studies, one may wonder how fossilization may be manifested in other linguistic domains, such as the acquisition of lexical forms. What, for example, accounts for the acquisition potential of a lexical item, and why might this vocabulary item be fossilized?

Research has indicated that a learner's lexical competence in the L2 may cease to develop even with plenty of contextualized input (Jiang, 2000; Lardiere, 1998; Long, 1997). That is to say, similar to the acquisition and fossilization of morphosyntactic features, L2 vocabulary development  may also fossilize. According to Jiang (2000), L2 vocabulary acquisition consists of three stages: (1) the formal stage, (2) the L1 lemma mediation stage, and (3) the L2 integration stage. In the initial stage, the formal stage, a lexical entry containing only formal specifications is established for an L2 word. In the second stage, the L1 lemma mediation stage, the L2 word takes on both the lemma information (i.e., semantic and syntactic information) of the word's L1 counterpart and the L2 lexeme information (i.e., formal information); it is during this intermediary stage that the former type of information is transferred into the latter, and mediates L2 word use. In the final stage, the L2 integration stage, L2 information

(i.e., semantic, syntactic, morphological specifications) is integrated into the lexical entry.

When provided with sufficient, highly contextualized L2 input and practice, the learner will presumably reach the third stage of L2 lexical acquisition, L2 integration. In reality, however, a majority of L2 words fossilize at the second stage, L1 lemma mediation, even under the most desirable learning conditions (Jiang, 2000). Jiang (2000, 2004) suggests that previously established L1 lemma (i.e., L1 semantic system) mediation is apparently a major cause for the difference in lexical development between the L2 and the L1, and more importantly, for the fossilization of most L2 words.

In reviewing Han's (2004)  work and Han & Odlin's (2006) work, Fidler (2006) concludes that perspectives on fossilization remain diverse and idiosyncratic; besides, there is little consensus as to what methodologies for investigating fossilization  will yield reliable results.

## 2.7. Causes and Sources of Fossilization

As far as the sources of fossilization are concerned, Selinker (1991:30) states that sources of fossilization might be related to restricted L2 input or the motivational factors. Selinker (Ibid:36) also points out that any part of IL can fossilize from phonology through syntax through rhetoric through conversation and communication strategies. Preston (1989) and Zuengler (1989 a, b and c) conclude that social identity factors are prime causes for fossilization.

In discussing the causes of fossilization , Selinker and Lamedella (1979 ) state that fossilization takes place when the cessation of L2 learning persists "in spite of the learner's ability , opportunity , and motivation to learn the

TL and acculturate into the target society" ( p.374 ). Fossilization is brought about by a lack of / or inability to process input, or a large social or psychological distance between the learner and the culture of the L2.

In some cases fossilization is due to biological bases in that some L2 learners are thought to have a greater genetic predisposition to fossilize farther from TL norms than other learners ( Selinker & Lamedella, 1979 ). One of the ways in which learners differ is in genetically determined differences in learning ability. This factor is related to critical period hypothesis. After the close of the critical period for primary language acquisition, the L2 learner stands a greater chance of fossilizing far from TL norms.  In a addition to genetic disposition for language learning, age is the other causal factor determining the onset of fossilization.

In a later study , Selinker & Lakshmanan ( 1992 ) emphasize the importance of the role of language transfer in fossilization . These researchers raise the question of why "certain linguistic structures become fossilized while others do not." They suggest that the multiple effects principle ( MEP ) may help explain this. The ( MEP ) states that two or more SLA factors  tend  to promote stabilization of IL forms and fossilization. Language transfer is a privileged factor .

Nakuma ( 1998 ) discusses two of the basic assumptions that

are implicit in the general understanding of fossilization. The first assumption is that fossilized forms were " learned in a deviant form " ( p.251 ) . Here, the learner unsuccessfully learned the TL form . In terms of the competence / performance distinction, this assumption

implies that the deviant form was acquired by the learner; therefore, fossilization is a competence – level phenomenon. The second assumption is that fossilization involves deviant forms of the TL.

## 3. The Main Study

## 3.1. Statement of the Problem

The author's long experience in teaching  EFL at primary and secondary stages in Jordan and the Sultanate of Oman, a supervisor of EFL in Jordanian Schools, a teacher trainer for Jordanian English teachers, a part-time lecturer at the University of Jordan, a faculty member at both Zarqa University and the University of Sciences and Technology in Jordan, and a faculty member at Shaqra university in Saudi Arabia kept him in close contact with EFL learners and users. As a result of this contact, the author witnessed various aspects of fossilization used by learners and teachers in their interaction and performing tasks via English. It was also observed that those aspects of fossilization were influenced by certain factors. This actual observation motivated the author to investigate this problem.

The present research aims at investigating and identifying the fossilized aspects of language in the performance of Jordanian EFL learners and teachers. It also studies the possible factors that may influence those fossilized forms. It, particularly, addresses the following questions:

1) What fossilized forms do Jordanian EFL learners and teachers tend to employ in their communication?

2) What are the possible factors that might affect the fossilized forms that are  used by Jordanian EFL learners and teachers?

3) What are the most frequent  fossilized forms used by Jordanian EFL learners and speakers?

## 3.2. Significance of the Study

The significance of the present study lies in its contribution to the field of psycholinguistics, and agrees with the new shift of emphasis in learning, and the growing interest in learners and the enhancement of their roles. Its significance also lies in the fact that not many studies were conducted in this field , especially in the Arab world. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there exist no studies conducted on Arab learners covering the scope of this study, particularly in Jordan. Its significance is also due to its coverage, its methodology, and its large scale.

Furthermore, its significance lies in the fact that it is in line with the new perspective which emphasizes the communicative competence. This study may be of a great value to psycholinguists who are concerned with the learning process and the acquisition of languages, especially second language and interlanguage. In addition, it may be of value to teaching practitioners who may observe rather unfamiliar patterns in students' speech. It may be also of value to syllabus designers in writing different materials according to the learners' goals. Finally, it can be of value to the discourse analysts who are concerned with investigating divergences in communicative aspects of non-native speakers' performance.

## 3.3. Data Collection and Method of Study

This is a longitudinal study conducted on a number of students and their respective teachers while the author was a supervisor of EFL at the Ministry of Education, Alqaser Directorate in Jordan. The study was carried out between 2001-2004. Four classes participated in the study; two male
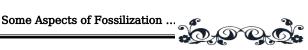
classes and two female ones. The total number of students was 118 of which there were 52 females and 66 males as shown in the table below. The subjects of the study were students of EFL who participated in the study while they were at Grade Nine ( about 15 years old), and continued up to Grade Twelve ( about 18 years old). This means that they spent from 9-12 years studying English since English is taught in Jordan at Grade one. There were no drop outs among the subjects of the study, i.e. all of them continued their learning up to grade 12. The respective teachers also continued to teach those students and there was no transfer for any of them to other schools.

Table 1: shows the subjects of the study- their number, sex, and approximate age

| No. of students | Male | Female | Time of Exposure to English | Approximate Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 118 | 66 | 52 | 9-12 years | 15-18 years |

Three methods were used in this study. First, actual observation while the author was attending classes, taking notes and recording some dialogues and discussions. Second, interviews, structured and non-structured ones, during which the author initiates a topic and asks students to talk about that topic using any type of structure or any vocabulary items they like. Third, a multiple choice exam where the author listed down most of the fossilized words , phrases, structures, and pronunciation in the form of questions and asked the subjects of the study to choose the most correct un-fossilized item among four alternatives.

## 3.4. Discussion and Analysis of Fossilized forms

In analyzing the students' oral performance, it was found that the following aspects of fossilization were persistent. These aspects were classified into the following categories.  Examples on each aspect were drawn from  the grammar, pronunciation, and lexicon of both teachers and students.

 First, pronunciation.  This category involves the following sub divisions:

A. The use of epenthesis , i.e. the insertion of a vowel between consonant clusters , e.g., most students pronounce "film" as / fɪlɪm / instead of  / fɪlm / ; "ends" as / endɪz / instead of  /endz / ; "thinks" / θɪŋkɪs / for / θɪŋks /; "desks" / deskɪs /for/ desks /. However,  "spring" is pronounced as / sɪprɪŋ / and / ɪsprɪŋ / instead of / sprɪŋ / ; "silver" is pronounced as / sɪlɪvər / instead of / sɪlvə /;  "spray"   is pronounced as  / ɪspreɪ / and / sɪpreɪ / instead of / spreɪ / ; and  "kings" is pronounced as  / kɪngiz / instead of  /kɪŋz /. The reason behind this is that Arabic language has no consonant clusters; each consonant in Arabic is either followed by a vowel sound, or it is marked by a diacritic sound, i.e. semi-vowel sound (in Arabic: fatha, thama, or kasra فتحة، ظمة، او كسرة).

B. Replacing one phoneme by another , e.g.,

"hosbital" for ( hospital ) ; "bresent"    for ( present ); "brivate" for

( private );  "broud" for ( proud ); "burity" for ( purity ). In these examples, most students replace the phoneme /p/ with /b/ because there is no /p/ phoneme in Arabic. Thus, it was replaced by /b/ because they are both bilabial sounds produced by the same place of articulation, i.e. the lips, but

[p] is a voiceless sound; whereas, [b] is a voiced sound. Consider also the following group of words: "fan" for ( van ); "fast" for ( vast ); "belief" for (believe). Here, the students replace the phoneme /v/ with /f/ because there is no [v] sound in Arabic. Thus, it was replaced by [f] since they are both labiodentals, but [v] is a voiced sound; whereas, [f] is a voiceless sound  produced by the same place of articulation. But in this case, the students produced new words with different meanings, i.e. "fan" is totally different in meaning from "van" and so does "fast" which is semantically different from  "vast. " However, the word "belief" is different from  "believe" on the basis of word class, i.e. the former is a noun; whereas, the later is a verb. Moreover, a big percentage of Jordanian EFL learners and their respective teachers replace the sound [ ŋ ] by the sounds [ng]  .This occurs because there is no [ŋ ] sound in Arabic and this sound is difficult to be pronounced by Arab speakers learning English. Consequently, students pronounce "writing" as / raɪtɪng / instead of / raɪtɪŋ /, and "evening" as / iːvnɪng / instead of / iːvnɪŋ /. In the above examples, the influence of Arabic is quite clear.

C- Replacing a vowel by another one , e. g. ,

 "role" was pronounced by most students as /ruːl/ instead of /rəʊl/ which results in a new semantically different word. Most students also pronounce "rifle" as / rɪfɪl / which is a fossilized form of / raɪfəl / . This could be explained by the fact that the diphthong [aɪ] is scarce in Arabic. Consider also the following word "foot" which was pronounced by most Arab students as  /fuːt/   not  /fʊt/. This could be explained by the fact that Arab speakers, particularly, Jordanians tend to lengthen the vowels. Thus, there is an Arabic slang word used extensively, i.e. "foot فووت"  which is

used in commands to mean "Enter! ادخل"    The Arabic interference is quite clear in these examples.

D-Pronunciation of silent ( unpronounced ) letters , e . g .

 "tomb" is pronounced by most students as  /tumb / or /tʌmb/  instead of /tuːm /. A large number of students even some EFL teachers pronounce "almond" as  /ælmɒnd/ or /ɑːlmənd/ instead of  /ɑːmənd/.  Some students pronounce "comb" as /kʌmb/ instead of  /kəʊm/; "debt" as  /debet/ instead of /det /; "Autumn" was pronounced as  /ɔːtəmn/ instead of /ɔːtəm /;   "plough" is pronounced as / plʌf / and / plaʊf / instead of  /plaʊ /; similarly, a big percentage of Arab learners pronounce "corps" as / kɔːrps / or / kɔːrpɪs / instead of / kɔːz / . These examples serve as a reminder that the sounds of spoken English do not match up, a lot of the times , with the letters of written English; whereas, each single letter in Arabic is pronounced except the solar (L), i.e. "L Ashamsiyah أل الشمسية". Thus, when Arab learners of English encounter a new unfamiliar word, they try to pronounce each single letter.

  E- Incorrect pronunciation of the inflectional morpheme ( - ed ) in words ending with voiceless sounds such  as [ k ] , [ s ] , [ p ] e.g., "talked" was pronounced by most students as /tɔːkid/ , "passed" was pronounced as /pɑːsid /, "stopped" as /stɒpid/ instead of /tɔːkt/, /pɑːst/ and /stɒpt/, respectively.

Second , Grammar – This category involves the following sub divisions:

A. Forming questions , e . g .

1. What are you see ? – for [ what are you seeing / what do you see ? ] Here the student uses the incorrect auxiliary.

2. What the man in the picture is doing ? – for [ what is the man in the picture doing?]

3. When I can use it? - for [ When can I use it?]

In examples 2 and 3, there is no conversion between the subject and the auxiliary verb.

B. Agreement between the subject and the verb , e.g.

1. who  want [wants] to answer me ?

2. He play [ plays ] chess , if he get [ gets ] ....

3.  Is chess played by one person or two person [ persons ] ?

Consider also the following dialogue which is a part of an interview between the supervisor of EFL (A) and  a teacher who applied for  a supervisor vacancy (B):

4.  A): Tell me how we can teach vocabulary items.

   B):  Ok. I think there are many way [ways]  to teach vocabulary items such as the use of pictures and stories.

A):  What else?

 B):  Of course, there are another [other] things.

C. The use of passive , e . g .

1. The school found / was found [ was founded ] in 1960.

2. The book written / wrote [ was written ] by him .

D. Reported questions , e.g.

1.  I don't know where does / did he go .

2.  She asked him why was he absent.

In these two examples, the  auxiliary is wrongly placed before the subject as if it is a direct question in spite of the introductory statements, i.e. " I don't know" in the first example and " She asked him" in the second example.

E. The use of incorrect preposition ,e.g.

1.  She is afraid from [of] the cat.

2.  The sun rises from [in] the east.

3.  He is meeting him in [at] nine o'clock.

In the first example, "afraid from" is used instead of "afraid of" which is a literal translation of Arabic "yakhafu min يخاف من"; similarly, the expression " from the east" is an Arabic translation of  "min asharg من الشرق". The third example is also an interference from Arabic language since Arab speakers use "in  nine o'clock في تمام الساعة التاسعة"  or even "on nine o'clock على الساعة التاسعة". Moreover,  a big percentage of the learners add a preposition where there is no need for this  preposition due to a literal translation from  Arabic. Consider the following examples:

4- He failed in [ø ] the exam

5- She will visit her uncle in [ø ] the next week.

In example (4) most of students add the preposition (in) because the verb "fail" is intransitive in Arabic; whereas,it is transitive in English. However, most Arab speakers use the  preposition (in) with " next week" in their spoken language. Thus, they say "fi alisboa' alqadem في الإسبوع القادم".

F. Incorrect place of adjectives, e.g.

1- He bought a house new [ a new house].

2- She speaks accent British [British accent].

Here, the  Arabic interference is quite clear since the adjective in Arabic is placed before the noun not after it.

G. Incorrect place of adverbs, e.g.

1.  He quickly ran [ran quickly].

2.  I last night bought a card  [I bought a card last night].

In the first example above, "quickly ran" is a fossilized expression both in English and Arabic. But in the second

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example, most of the Arab speakers place the adverb of time after the subject in their spoken language.

H. Repetition of the pronouns, e.g.

1.  The sun it sets [ The sun sets] in the west.

2.  The cat I saw it [The cat I saw] yesterday was black.

3.  Studying at the library it [ø ] is very interesting.

4.  Evening classes they [ø ]  are helpful.

I. Incorrect plural nouns, e.g.

1- He saw two childs [children].

2- she had five gooses [geese].

3- He fed two oxes [oxen].

In the above three examples, students use the wrong plural form by adding the plural morpheme [-s] to the singular nouns. This is a sort of overgeneralization in that the student wrongly applies a certain rule to different linguistic forms and contexts.

J. The use of incorrect demonstrative pronoun, e.g.

1- This [These] skills are good.

2- These [This] exercise is helpful.

K. The use of incorrect verb tense, e.g.

1.  Do you finish [have you finished] the exercise?

2.  Do you prepare [ Have you prepared ] the lesson?

3.  He was late because he is [was] sick.

In the first two  examples, the simple present form was used instead of present perfect because there is no present perfect tense in Arabic.

L. The use of the definite article with gerunds, e.g.

1. The swimming is good.

2. The smoking is dangerous.

The use of the definite article with gerunds is an interference from Arabic. This is due to interference from Arabic because Arab speakers use the definite article with gerunds in the subjective case.

M. The use of negatives, e.g.

1. He not be rich [  He is not rich ].

2. She not played tennis. [She did not play] tennis.

Some students negate the sentence by using just the negative particle "not" without using the appropriate auxiliary verb.

Third , lexicon.

 This category involves the use of incorrect forms and expressions, e.g.

1. Listen while the tape is speaking [ playing ]. (This sentence occurs in the teacher's performance while giving instructions to students.)

2.  The teacher learned [taught] me how to read and write. (This sentence was an answer to the question: What did your teacher teach you?) Although the question includes the word "teach," the student did not use it.

3- The old man left [quit/gave up] smoking. (Here, the student used the verb "left" which is equivalent to the Arabic verb "taraka/ ترك" which is used in a broad sense to refer to various meanings, among of which is " quit/gave up."

4.  He went to hospital before two days [ two days ago ]. (This is a literal translation to the Arabic equivalent, i.e. "gabel yawmain/يومين" "قبل)

5.  My old [age] is 21. (This occurs in a student's performance while he was introducing himself.)

6.  She likes [prefers] tea to coffee.

7. I need to go to the doctor [dentist] when I've got a toothache.

(This sentence was an answer to the question: What will you do if you've got a toothache?) Here, the student used the word " doctor" in an inappropriate context.

8. My brother is beautiful [good-looking/handsome]. In this example, the word " beautiful" is used wrongly in a different context.

In analyzing the fore-mentioned examples , it is found that most grammatical and / or  pronunciation errors have as their source "interference" from the native language. This means that most of the persistent common language problems are attributed to interference of Arabic language since most of teachers / learners when they struggle with English , they tend to recourse to their native language ,i.e. Arabic.

## 3.5. Conclusion,  Findings and Recommendations

It was found out that most students used fossilized utterances at the phonemic level, word  level, phrase level and sentence level. The most frequent fossilized aspects were in pronunciation. The next  most frequent fossilized aspects were in subject-verb agreement, then the word order; whereas, the least frequent fossilized aspects were in the use of articles, i.e. definite and indefinite ones.  Most of the fossilized forms are due to interference from the native

language (Arabic) into the target langue (English). The literal translation was the most apparent factor. It is also concluded that Arab learners cannot   attain truly native proficiency since fossilization applies to all aspects of language.

It is recommended that text designers should incorporate the aspects of fossilization in the syllabi with emphasis on the ways and methods of avoiding those aspects. Besides, teachers of EFL should concentrate on the fossilized forms and expressions and train students on the correct ones. However, in order to avoid fossilization, the following recommendations should be taken in to consideration :

 1. reducing the distance between the learner and the L2 culture;

2. increasing integrative motivation of learning L2 as well as increasing and  reinforcing the positive attitudes towards L2;

3. enough exposure to L2 via direct contact, mass media and the internet;

4. awareness of computer programs that lead learners step by step through various exercises;

5. sufficient comprehensible input. One way that this may be achieved is  through the adaptations – formal and interactional – that have been observed to occur in the speech that the native speakers address to learners. Another way is through the use of communication strategies, which serve to help the learner overcome problems of communicating with limited L2 resources.

6. Following Cui, 2009; Kroll, Michael, Tokowicz, & Dufour, 2002, it is recommended that in order to fully acquire L2

words, learners should have to go through the process of semantic restructuring and establish a semantic system that is not only specifically for L2 vocabulary, but also free from the influence of the L1 semantic system.
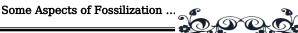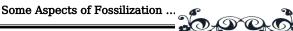
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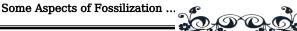-Bialystok, E. and Sharwood Smith, M. (1985). "Interlanguage is not a state of mind: An evaluation of the construct for second - language  acquisition". Applied Linguistics, 6/2: 101-117.-Bley – Vorman, Robert (1989 ) . "what is the logical problem of foreign language learning? In  S. M. Gass, & L. Selinker (Eds.), Language transfer in language learning Amsterdam: John Benjamins, pp. 197-216..

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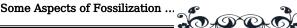
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