

# PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY ARAB POPULATION IN ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH AS SECOND LANGUAGE

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## **ABSTRACT:**

*The art of communication through the gift of language is an exclusive prerogative of humans. Language bestows people with the power to organizing, planning, shaping, and controlling other human beings at various levels starting from child-parent interactions to propaganda on radio and television advertising. Our societal participation requires us to recognize and reflect the symbols and sounds that indicate our ideas and thoughts, which is crucial. There are numerous languages in the world. Thus, human beings share their skills for harnessing the creativity within them to enhance their living by invoking their ability to acquire several languages. They strive to understand also the languages, which are unknown to them. Neurological factors in language acquisition and retention play an essential role in learning different languages. Language acquisition and retention exist in the Arab population as well. The Arab people have observed an optimistic and rapid variation in the utilization of the English language in their education and business. This adoption of the English language has made them literate and empowered them. Problems are still prevailing among Arab learners, as they struggle to comprehend English and have difficulties in expressing themselves through English. They are acquiring other languages and retaining their usage in learning, as the second language becomes strenuous due to lack of motivation. This research paper analyzes and contextualizes the problems associated with understanding, learning and acquisition of English as a second language, specifically among Arab learners.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Learning, acquisition, retention, Arab learners, communication, etc.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION:**

The Gulf region encompasses a multilingual and diverse society and culture. The official language of these regions is Arabic, which is commonly endeavored in their communication of speaking, writing and reading. The language is highly prestigious and is based on the Holy Quran, the sacred book. The people in the Gulf region are united with this language. Arabic itself is classified into various dialects that are spoken among different areas of the middle-east. These dialects are referred to as colloquial Arabic. These dialects are used by Arab people in their various conversations. Speakers of Arabic find it a difficult one for learning and acquiring a second language. The usage of multiple Arabic dialects is common in Arab countries. This usage is referred to as Arabic Diglossia, two forms of one language used for various functions. The

Arab people find it challenging to learn and acquire their own classic Arabic. Hence a second language is essential for them for communication among their different groups. The rapid development of technology, communication and business influenced the introduction of English as the second language. English has become official in companies and became a medium of communication in schools and universities. Many people believe English is a prerequisite for social and professional success as many jobs are linked with English proficiency. As the Arab people also consider learning, acquiring and retaining English would promote their professional careers.

For satisfying the social and economic demand for English proficiency, many English schools are built in the gulf region. These educational institutions are constructed to offer bilingual education for Arab students. These schools are also meant to prepare Arab students to face future challenges and sustain themselves in a competitive environment. These institutions also have the Islamic and Arabic curriculum offered by the education ministries of Arab countries that provide a high proficiency in Arabic. Most eminently, there are differences between English and Arabic in terms of orthographical, rhetorical, semantic, lexical, phonological, morphological and syntactical aspects. This research paper contemplates two languages like Arabic and English. The contemplation is done on grammatical and phonological problems, and analysis is made on how the interference of Arabic impacts the learning and acquisition of English. The alphabets in English and Arabic are not equivalent. The Arabic learners would sometimes make a substitution on the English alphabet, which is similar to the Arabic pronunciation. The objective of this research is to analyze the literature and linguistic term associated with language interference. Experimental research was carried out. The data were gathered and examined for analyzing the results, which indicates the living environment of the learners, their language exposure and the learning and teaching process associated with their Arab culture.

## **2. RELATED WORKS:**

(Kay Gallagher 2011) analyzed the contextual variables and macro factors encapsulating the recent study of compulsory schooling of bilingual education in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, with a view for generating discussion based on some information and understanding pedagogical, linguistic and socio-cultural issues by stakeholders. His paper examined the language that was followed in education in Abu Dhabi and which had a framework of outcomes, situational and operational factors present in bilingual education based on the perception of Beardsmore and Spolsky. The results of his study indicated that socio-economic, academic and linguistic benefits are offered by bilingual education for the future of emirate students. However, the bilateral acquisition was a challenging one due to the Arabic language's diglossic characteristics and the linguistic distances between English and Arabic.

(Al Kahtib 2017) conducted a study on innovative foreign and second language acquisition and education in North Africa and the Middle East. His paper contemplates two eminent purposes, such as to analyze the problems and progress in the second language

development and acquisition in North Africa and the Middle East and to analyze the theoretical aspects and policies related to the education of the second language in the chosen countries. In the Middle East, Iran, Turkey, Tunisia and Jordan were preferred, and North Africa was selected to analyze language planning and language teaching characteristics in these countries. The study reveals that the driving factor in applying foreign languages is not an interest for preparing the students to develop a global economy.

(Fatiha Hanani 2009) conducted research on the effect of English on the use of Arabic by young Arabs in the United Arab Emirates. The research was conducted on the cultural backgrounds and among the different nationalities among the Arabic-speaking students of 14-16 years. Surveys and questionnaires were used for the analysis. The paper analyzed the English acquisition by the Arab students and their effects. The study results indicated that the Arab students pursuing in English schools like to speak in English than in Arabic outside and inside their schools. They also prefer to write and read in English. The paper also reflected their pessimistic attitude towards their native language. The study recommends equal values for both the languages, Arabic and English.

(Al-Nasser 2015) carried out an analysis on the challenges and acquisition of the English language in Saudi Arabia. It was exploratory research and a remedial study. His study outlined the significant problems and barriers that Saudi Arabian Students face in their English learning and acquisition. The paper proposed restorative solutions for the issues and obstacles. Al-Nasser contemplated on the methodologies of teaching and the atmosphere for learning, which were prevalent in the English classrooms of Saudi Arabia. The study reveals that the students face some challenges in learning and acquiring English. The study recommends a straightforward learning approach for an easy learning approach for English learning and acquisition.

(Majdi Abdullah 2016) researched the acquisition of English articles by the Arabic language by the English learners, which was a semantic approach. His paper examined this concept through various linguistic methods reflected based on semantic conditions such as specificity and definiteness. The results indicated that the students were accurate in using their articles in specific contexts compared to particular indefinite contexts. Advance learning students performed as native learners, and some learners showed errors in some contexts. There were variations in simplicity and development among these learners. The research recommends a model for developing, learning, and acquiring the article system of the English language by Arab students. Also, it recommends linguistic knowledge in the acquisition of a second language.

### **3. METHODOLOGY:**

The English language learning and acquisition by the Arabic students were analyzed in the research. Direct interviews and questionnaires were used for data collection for the proposed research. Based on the difficulties, differences and sequences of English language acquisition, the study was conducted. The proposed research on exploring the second language learning and acquisition by Arab students, which is contemplated on the English language as second language learning, made use of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. In some areas, both

these approaches are employed for exploring the learning process of the English language by Arab students. For the research, two ontological categories were considered such as optimist and constructivist. These were useful for the investigation.

Four tasks are encompassed within the methodology section, and the participants were advised to complete these four tasks to get the accuracy of the research. The participants comprised 32 Arab students from various Arab nations such as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Bahrain studying in the same college at the undergraduate level. The group classification comprised 20 females and 12 male students of age 18-25 years. The research participants were pursuing different fields of study such as; healthcare, engineering, literature and computer science. These participants were classified based on two types of proficiency levels in English (16 learners of high-level group and 16 learners of low-level group). The first task encompassed a questionnaire, which was used to collect personal information about the participants. The second task comprised a grammatical task with ten questions of English grammar to check the grammar skills of the participants. These questions were based on articles and sentences related to English grammar. The third task comprised a yes/no task having 200 words of both natural and imaginary English words, and the final task was the vocabulary task, which was used to test the students' vocabulary skills. The receptive skills of the participants were tested with the yes/no test. The vocabulary task was a productive task, where the learners could freely write any works associated with the test. The participants are divided into two divisions based on their English proficiency level.

#### **4. DATA COLLECTION:**

The research was direct research, where all four tasks were needed to be completed by the participants. About 90 minutes were allotted to complete all four tasks. Alternatively, one by one, the tasks were completed by all the participants. Initially, the grammatical task was completed by the participants. In this task, there were 20 sentences of different conversations based on articles. The Arab students were advised to judge these sentences as correct, incorrect and don't know. In the yes/no task, words are given without their meaning, which is to be found by the participants, i.e., they must answer as yes/no for if they know the meaning of the word or not. In the vocabulary task, they were asked to write some words, approximately four words associated with the meaning of the word they read. The collected data is analyzed based on surety and accuracy. Time was an eminent factor for data collection and analysis.

#### **5. RESULTS:**

The results highlighted the participants' responses for high-level and low-level English language learning and acquisition for surety and accuracy by Arab students based on the questions of research of the proposed study.

**5.1 Task 1:*****Personal Information of the Respondents***

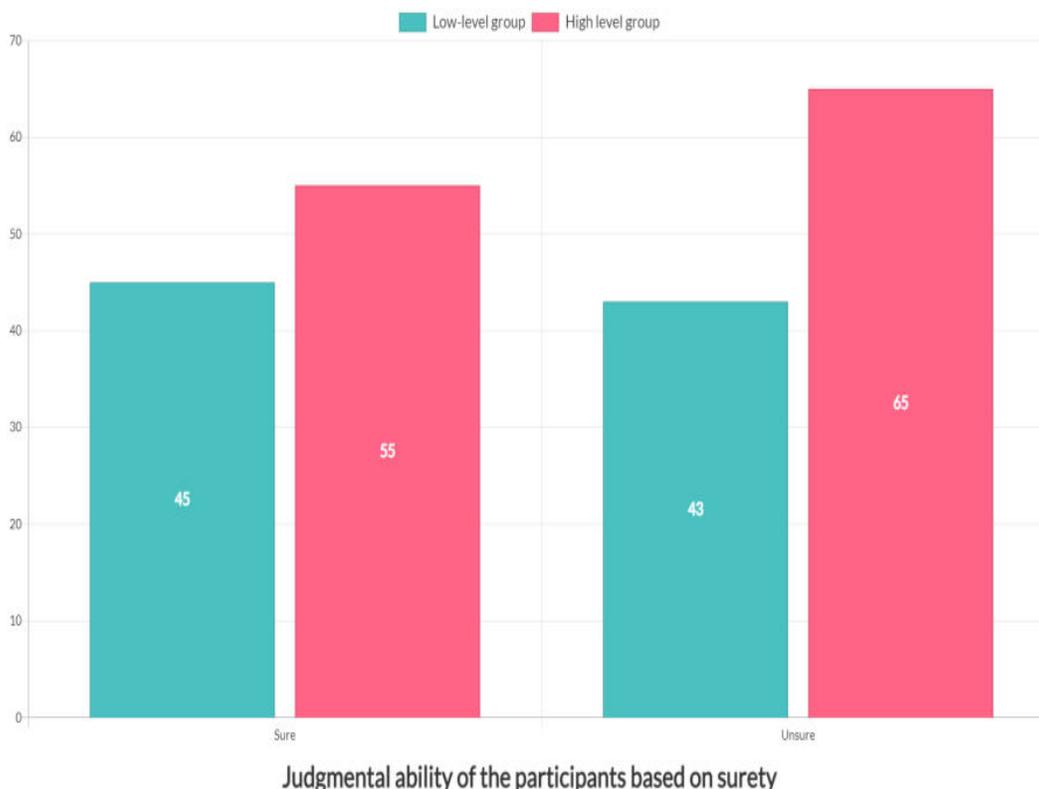
Group of respondents	Age	Country of origin	Known languages
Group A (1-8)	18-25	Saudi Arabia	English, Chinese, Arabic
Group B (9-16)	18-25	United Arab Emirates	English, Hindi, Arabic
Group C (17-24)	18-25	Kuwait	English, French
Group D (25-32)	18-25	Bahrain	English, Arabic

**Table 1: Personal Information of the Respondents**

In the first task, the personal information of the respondents was collected. The respondents were divided into four groups based on their country of origin. They were pursuing in the same college at the undergraduate level. Data was gathered regarding their age, country of origin and known languages.

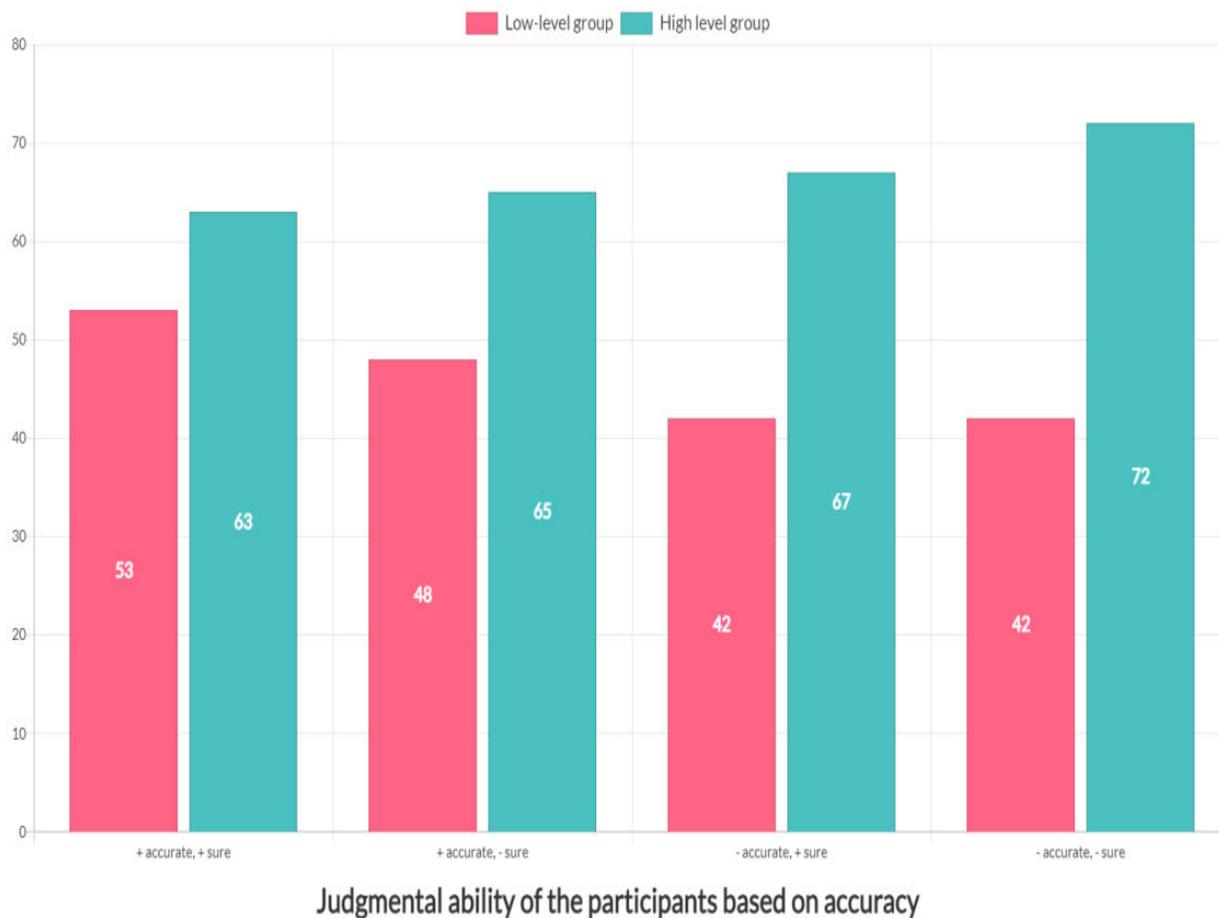
**5.2 Task 2*****Judgmental Task of English Grammar***

The judging ability of the participants was demonstrated in the below figure.

**Figure 1: The judgmental ability of the participants based on the surety**

The high-level group of respondents scored 55 points in the surety about the articles in the task, and the low-level group of the participants achieved 45 points. Both low-level groups of participants had the judgmental ability of both surety about the articles and unsure about the articles in the task.

The following figure shows the judgmental ability of the participants based on accuracy.



**Figure 2: The judgmental ability of the participants based on accuracy and surety**

In the above figure, the judgmental ability of the participants based on both surety and accuracy is measured as; + accurate, + sure; + accurate, - sure; - accurate, + sure and - accurate, - sure. The results indicate that the judgmental ability of the participants based on accuracy about the articles is a little less than the judgmental ability of the participants based on surety about the articles. This task helps in measuring the predictive power of the participants and their accuracy in learning English grammar.

### 5.3 Task 3 and 4

The following table indicates the descriptive statistics for the yes/no task and vocabulary task.

Parameters	Yes/No Task	Vocabulary Task
Respondents	32	32
Mean value	4270	79
Standard Deviation (SD)	1681	21
Maximum	7427	111
Minimum	1433	16

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for yes/no task and vocabulary task**

The respondents performed well in the yes/no task and the vocabulary task, but in the judgmental task of English grammar, they lacked a little bit.

## 6. DISCUSSION:

Improvement is essential for the respondents and other students in improving the judgmental knowledge of their second language. This research aimed to explore the second language learning and acquisition by the students of the Arab countries and their judgmental ability about the second language based on surety and accuracy. The results indicated that the learners indicated their flexibility in learning their second language as English in the critical task. They were able to identify the mistakes in the sentences, which confirm the acquisition of their second language. The respondents correctly selected between the sure and unsure articles, and they were able to identify between the correct grammars in the sentences. Both the low-level and high-level learners identified the substitution or omission of the right articles in task 2. Thus, the respondents of the research were able to judge the English sentences rightly. The low performance of some respondents in the study was due to some reasons such as; complexity in identifying the correct articles in the sentences and contemplating less on the grammatical forms than on the meanings. Thus, low accuracy was found in the low-level group of learners. The performance of the high-level group of learners was found similar to the native speakers of the second language (English). The results maps out that accuracy and surety are impacted by the receptive vocabulary skills of the learners and their English proficiency level. Hence a high proficiency level is essential for low-performing people to learn and acquire their second language. Therefore the students of the gulf region need a high proficiency of receptive vocabulary, surety and accuracy in identifying the right grammatical sentences and to judge the accuracy and surety of these sentences correctly. This would help them in getting proper learning and acquiring of their second language. The high-level learners faced minimized complexities compared with the low-level group learners during the judgmental task especially. Minor variations are observed in the accuracy of the learners in the judgmental task of surety and precision. Grammatical errors were found to be complex for the low-level group of learners, who are impacted by the pessimistic transfer of their native language. Thus, the Arab students require a high knowledge of receptive vocabulary for surety and accuracy in judging the subjects related to the English language.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

The proposed research thus examined the language learning and acquisition accuracy of the Middle-east students by learning and acquiring the English language and judging surety and accuracy. An article system is encompassed in both Arabic and English languages, even when they differ from each other. All 32 respondents were asked to complete the four tasks. Among them, three tasks were used to analyze their language learning and acquisition of the English language, even if they had some difficulties. The results indicated that the respondents could identify the grammatical mistakes in English with surety and accuracy. Although there are less productive results in the research, improvements can be made with advanced techniques for language learning and acquisition for Arab students.

The second language learning and acquisition patterns provide opportunities for surviving in work and learn and acquire the target language with facilitating and influential factors. When complexities are faced in communication, they could follow some communicative strategies from native speakers of the language to be learned. These strategies could also be observed during the writing of the learning language. The learners can learn their target language very rapidly. The deterring factor in language learning and acquisition is age, which could be resolved using communication strategies and varied learning. Thus, in teaching a foreign or second language among the Arab learners, it is eminent to offer them meaningful, authentic and diverse opportunities for utilizing and extending their target language. Regular feedback should be provided to the learners to improve their efficiency in language learning and acquisition. This research thus provides valuable insights for language learning and acquisition. Further research could be conducted on minimizing the errors of learning a second language by learners of all nations.

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