

# Teaching Business English for Arab Learners

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# Outline

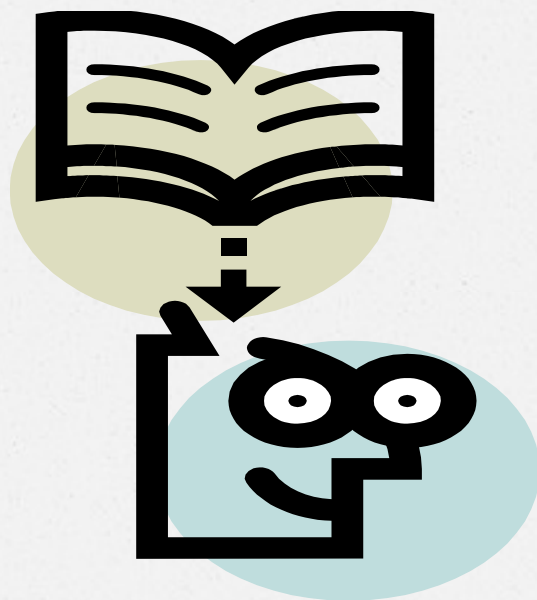
- o Introduction
- o Acquisition of L2
- o Four Problems
- o Negative Transfer
- o Differences in writing strategies
- o Prepositional knowledge
- o Collocational patterns
- o Implications

# Introduction

- Increasing population of Arab learners goes to English schools
- Need English language to communicate at work



# Introduction (*cont'd*)



- Arab learners enroll in business English courses so they can have the chance of working in multinational corporation
- As EFL learners, they face some difficulties

# Introduction (*cont'd*)

- Arab speakers face several problems while learning English
  - Phonological
  - Morphological
  - Structural



# Acquisition of L2

- o *"Acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language - natural communication - in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding." Stephen Krashen*

# Acquisition of L2 (cont'd)

- o *"The best methods are therefore those that supply 'comprehensible input' in low anxiety situations, containing messages that students really want to hear. These methods do not force early production in the second language, but allow students to produce when they are 'ready', recognizing that improvement comes from supplying communicative and comprehensible input, and not from forcing and correcting production." Stephen Krashen*

# Acquisition of L2

*(cont'd)*

- o Instructors: must design course and material that allow learners acquire desired skills through
  - o Meaningful interactions
  - o Provide enough time for assimilating the information



# Four Problems

- o Negative transfer
- o Different writing strategies
- o Prepositional knowledge
- o Collocational pattern



# Negative Transfer

- o Transfer: to cause something to pass from one place to another
- o Two types of transfer: **Negative** & **Positive**
- o **Negative transfer**: the use of prior knowledge in the production of 2<sup>nd</sup> language which results into unacceptable forms
  - o Damages, hinders and delays the acquisition of L2
- o **Positive transfer**: the same as negative transfer in terms of the use of prior knowledge/skills in the learning of L2

# Negative Transfer (*cont'd*)

- o Transfer in L2
  - o Arabic compared to English
    - o Different alphabet
    - o Different phonology
    - o Different syntax
    - o Different morphology

# Negative Transfer (*cont'd*)

- o Examples of Negative transfer:
  - o Students transfer from L1 to L2: hinders the learning and results into
    - o Distorted word order:
      - o L1: Verb+ Subject+ Object
      - o L2: Subject+ Verb+ Object
        - o Ate Maya the apple.
        - o The correct form: Maya ate the apple.

# Negative Transfer (*cont'd*)

- o Examples (cont'd)
  - o Translation: translating expressions
    - o Ex: I cut the street
      - o Grammatically correct but semantically incorrect
      - o Correct form: **I crossed the street**
    - o Ex: By accomplishing these plans, I will insure myself a great business plan
    - o Putting strategies for business management works my brain.
    - o I am disabled; I can't work anymore.
    - o The party then tasted a wonderful sense of share

# Transfer in L2

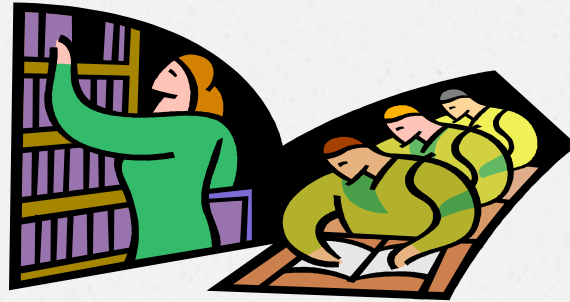
- o Negative transfer, therefore has a damaging effect
  - o It blocks acquisition of the language
- o Instructor has to include activities that help learner overcome this obstacle

# Writing Strategies

- o Culture affects how people write
  - o Culture: “the way we do things here or solve problems” (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998)



# Writing Strategies (*cont'd*)



- o Different expectations regarding rhetorical patterns or logical organization of any text (Bruce & Rafoth, 2004)
- o Language reflects culture
- o Arab discourse depends on its logic and cultural patterns



# Writing Strategies (*cont'd*)

- Arabic writing is:
  - filled with embellished literary style
  - Bases its style on the Quran
  - Refers to religious concepts as supporting points

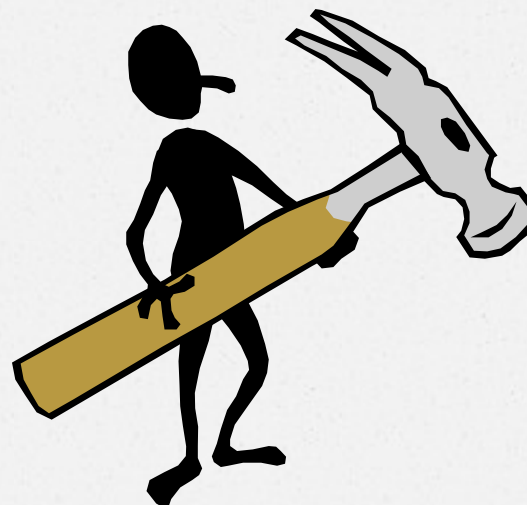


# Writing Strategies (*cont'd*)

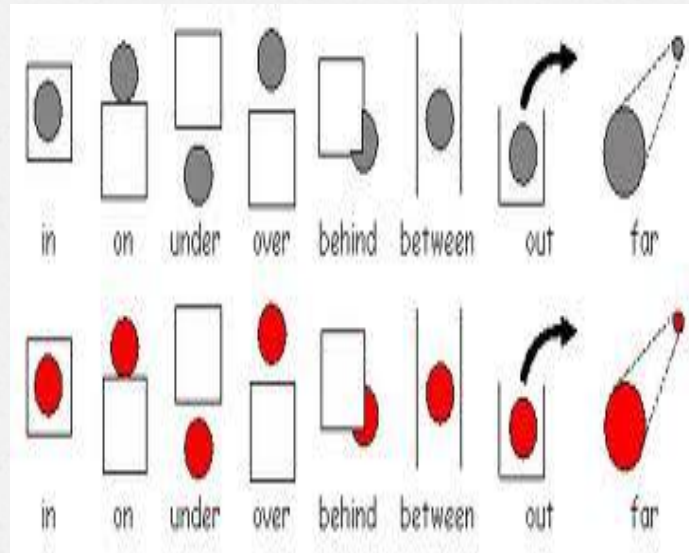
- o Arabs face three types of errors in verb phrase
  - o Verb formation
    - o What I want to be?
    - o You have a brother?
  - o Tenses
    - o I have been doing that since a long time ago.
    - o I have planned for the project for a long time.
  - o Subject-verb agreement
    - o The workers always finishes their report on time.

# Prepositional Knowledge

- Prepositions have different purposes in English & Arabic
- There are some prepositions in English that don't have equivalence in Arabic
- Arab learners usually depend on L1 prepositional knowledge to understand English prepositions





# Prepositional Knowledge (*cont'd*)



- In Arabic, there are verbs that do not take prepositions
- Compete, like, wait, result, collide, engage
- Some English prepositions may have several Arabic translations

# Prepositional Knowledge (*cont'd*)

- An Arabic preposition may be translated by English prepositions
  - Becomes difficult for Arab learners to choose which one to use
    - In my way to school.
    - Getting an early start about the project can help by determining about the time to excuse it.
    - I have trouble at work because  the lack of skills in management.
    - We have been working together  long time.

# Collocational Patterns

- o Collocation: “sequence of lexical items which habitually co-occur, but are nonetheless fully transparent in the sense that each lexical constituent is also a semantic constituent” (Curse, 1987).
  - o “group of words which occur repeatedly in a language” (Carter, 1998)
  - o “the way words combine in a language to produce natural-sounding speech and writing” (Oxford Collocations Dictionary, 2011)

# Collocational Patterns (*cont'd*)

- o Collocation plays an important role in learning L2
- o Learners need to know the co-text with which a word is used to learn it
- o Collocation problems exist when a difference between L1 & L2 partners exist
  - o Do mistakes
  - o Become/Get bankrupt
  - o Raise an objection

# Implications

- o Instructors of Business English should:
  - o Involve their learners in real-life situations
  - o Provide hands on activities that help students be more accurate
  - o Supply exercises focusing on verb “be” & article usage
  - o Use sentence combining exercises stressing S-V agreement & subject and object relative pronoun deletion and plural formation



# Implications (*cont'd*)

- o Provide rules that help learners choose the correct preposition
- o Provide learners with proper expressions through sufficient practice opportunities
- o Expose learners to new supporting arguments for their formal reports

# Implications (*cont'd*)



- o Work at supplying their business English learners with exercises that help them write correct form of sentences based on analysis of ideas

Thank you for you time and  
attention

