Causes of Pragmalinguistic Errors in University EFL Learners' Writings

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Abstract

Language errors committed by EFL learners are not only restricted to syntactic or grammatical rules of a foreign language, but also are of a pragmatic nature in numerous cases. In particular, errors pertaining to pragmalinguistics are usually misinterpreted to the extent of a communication breakdown in various situations. Hence, this research is conducted to investigate the causes and frequencies of pragmalinguistic errors in EFL intermediate- and advanced-level students' writings post analyzing the types of errors they commit. Accordingly, 92 essays of EFL university students have been analyzed with respect to pragmalinguistic types, causes and frequencies between low and high levels of language proficiency. The findings reveal that language transfer is the main cause of pragmalinguistic errors. It is also revealed that the same types of pragmalinguistic errors are made by both intermediate- and advanced-level students with comparable frequencies for some types but different frequencies for the others; yet, these differences did not reach a statistical significance.

Keywords: pragmatics, pragmalinguistics, language transfer, L1 influence, syntactic transfer, sentence construction, lexical devices

INTRODUCTION

Reaching a high level of proficiency in second language is an ultimate target to EFL learners. In this respect, most of the teaching materials and curricula offer a wealth of knowledge in the vocabulary and grammatical rules of a language through the four main skills (reading, listening, writing and speaking). Nonetheless, it has been noticed that even advanced learners, despite mastering -to a great extent- the grammar and vocabulary of a second language, may produce inappropriate target-like forms due to their lack of pragmatics.

Pragmatics which is, according to Yule (1996, p.3), the interpretation of the intended meaning of people in a certain context, is both culture-specific and language-specific; it is culture-specific when cultural/societal norms are of concern whereas it is language-specific when the linguistic formulae across languages are of concern. Accordingly, pragmatics is divided by Thomas (1983) into pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. Pragmalinguistics refers to the linguistic resources available in a language from which a speaker may choose to form a speech act and, moreover, is concerned with the relation

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between pragmatics and other linguistic fields of the language, especially grammar. Sociopragmatics, on the other hand, is concerned with using such forms appropriately according to different social norms such as social distance, power, status, politeness and direct/indirect strategies.

Leech (1983, pp. 10-11), in line with Thomas's categorization, illustrates in figure 1 below the difference between pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics stating that general pragmatics is divided into sociopragmatics, which "operates variably in different cultures or language communities, in different social situations, among different social classes", and pragmalinguistics which is the study of the "linguistic end of pragmatics" in which the resources of a language are considered in conveying a certain meaning.
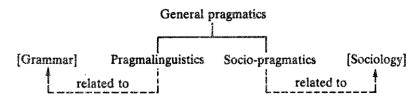

Figure 1. General pragmatics (Leech, 1983, p. 11)

A further illustration of Thomas's (1983) and Leech's (1983) categorization could be grasped by Thomas's (1983) and Riely's (1989) reference to pragmatics. Thomas (1983, p. 99) refers to pragmatics as "the place where a speaker's knowledge of grammar comes into contact with his/her knowledge of the world. But both systems of knowledge are filtered through systems of beliefs—beliefs about language and beliefs about the world". Accordingly, at a pragmalinguistic end, mistaken beliefs about the language are involved; however, at a socio-pragmatic end, mistaken beliefs about the society are involved (Riely, 1989, p. 235). Consequently, pragmatic failure occurs either due to a failure to "identify or express meanings correctly" at a pragmalinguistic end, or due to a failure to "identify a situation correctly" at a socio-pragmatic end (Riely, 1989, p. 235). In line with Riley's reference to pragmatic failure, Thomas (1983, p. 99) contends that whereas socio-pragmatic failure stems from "cross-culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behavior", pragmalinguistic failure is basically "a linguistic problem caused by differences in the linguistic encoding of pragmatic force".

The Scope of this Study

This study focuses on pragmalinguistics rather than sociopragmatics as well as focuses on the causes of pragmalinguistics in writing rather than speaking. pragmalinguistics, unfortunately, has rarely been investigated in the literature; even though some studies such as House & Kasper (1981), Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984), House (1984), Bergman & Kasper (1993), Takahashi (2005), House & Kasper (1987), and Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1986) investigated pragmalinguistics, such investigation was from a sociopragmatic perspective rather than a pragmalinguistic one. That is, the aforementioned researches merely dealt with non-native speakers' use of mitigation devices and modifiers in performing target-like-form speech acts taking into consideration the native's social norms (status, power, directness/indirectness and politeness). Contrarily, very rare

studies such as (Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986) and (Muir, 2011) -with a particular focus on the causes- investigated pragmalinguistic formulae of L2 learners' production.

Aim and Significance of the Research

The first aim of this research is to identify the causes of pragmalinguistic errors made by university students in their essays. The second aim of this research is to examine the differences of pragmalinguistic errors' frequency between different levels of language proficiency. The significance of the research lies in identifying the causes which lead to pragmalinguistic failure in order to overcome them, thus enhancing the level of second language proficiency. Also, it is important to identify the frequency of pragmalinguistic errors' occurrence in different levels of proficiency in order to re-evaluate the teaching materials and curricula.

Research Questions

1- What is/are the main cause(s) of pragmalinguistic errors?
2- To what extent is there a difference between intermediate- and advanced-level EFL learners with regards to the frequency of occurrence of pragmalinguistic errors in their writings?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pragmalinguistic Failure

Thomas (1983) points out that pragmalinguistic failure may stem from pragmalinguistic transfer which is considered the main cause of miscommunication. Pragmalinguistic failure, according to Thomas (1983, p.101), may stem from the transfer of: 1) Speech act strategies from one language to another. 2) Mother tongue semantically/syntactically equivalent structures to the target language.

Transfer of Speech Act Strategies

Some conventionalized formulas have specific acts in a language, yet, may not have the same act in another language; for example, *'Can you X?'* in British English is a conventionalized request rather than asking about one's ability to do X. So, *'Can you close the window?'* is realized as a request in British English to close the window rather than an ability question of asking about the hearer's ability to close the window. In contrast, other languages such as French and Russian do not have such conventionalized requests, and hence, such languages would treat the aforementioned example as an ability question rather than an act of request (Thomas, 1983). Thomas, further, reports on a situation in an English classroom where the English teacher asked a Russian student *'Would you like to read?'* to which the student responded *'No, I wouldn't'*. Similarly, Wierzbicka (1985, p. 101) reports the same case in the English and Polish languages. He states that a conventionalized request in English is carried out by the ability question *'Could you x me y?'*. However, in Polish it does not carry the same meaning; that is, it does not function as a request, it rather functions as an ability question asking for the hearer's ability to

perform *'y'*. The same applies to offers; while offers are conventionalized by the form *'Would you like x?'* in English, the same formulas do not carry the same meaning in Polish.

Transfer of Mother Tongue Semantically/Syntactically Equivalent Structures

Like speech acts, some semantically/syntactically equivalent structures may function in one language differently than the other. Yule (1996, p.5) narrates an incident in which he was in Saudi Arabia and used to reply to the equivalent of *'how are you'* with the conventionalized equivalent structure *'okay'* or *'fine'* which was used in his language and which conforms to his culture. However, he realized after a short stay that he should reply with the conventionalized Arabic structure *'Praise to God'*. Replying with *'okay'* or *'fine'* may convey a message to the hearer that Yule is a foreigner who does not know the righteous response to asking about one's health in Arabic and, fortunately, may not cause any offense or misunderstanding. Nevertheless, other equivalent L1 transfer may convey a totally different meaning than the intended one or may, further, be offensive. In Russian, for example, the word *'konesno'* means *'of course'* and is used sometimes instead of the word *'yes'* to convey "an enthusiastic affirmative". Thus, when a Russian speaker uses *'konesno'* as an answer to *'Is it a good restaurant?'* or *'Is it open on Sundays?'*, it may unintentionally carry the meaning of *'what a stupid question, idiot'* to an English hearer due to the fact that such a formula is used in English to imply that the speaker has asked about an obvious status (Thomas, 1983, p.101). A further illustration of a semantically/syntactically-equivalent-structure transfer would require its breakdown into its bare essentials, namely, the transfer of semantically equivalent structures and the transfer of syntactically equivalent structures. The following illustration and examples clarify both structures.

The Transfer of Semantically Equivalent Structures

Semantically equivalent structures are structures that have the same meaning, yet, differ in their linguistic realizations and in their functions. For example, Davis (1987) reports that the Arabic *"/hamdullah/ praise to God"* and the English *"thank God"* are semantically equivalent; however, they function differently. The Arabic */hamdullah/* can be used as a response for asking for one's health, an indication of finishing a meal, or a declination of a food offer (as well as other offers). On the other hand, the English *'thank God'* cannot be used to have the same function in the previous situations (Davis, 1987, pp. 82-83).

The Transfer of Syntactically Equivalent Structures

Syntactically equivalent structures are structures that have the same syntax in different languages, yet, differ in their meaning and in their functions. For example, the syntactic phrase *'thank you'* is used to accept an offer in English; however, it is used to refuse one in Malay (Richards & Sukwiwat, 1983, p. 116). Another example is the syntactic structure *'I'll take care of it'* which, unlike its use in English to indicate acceptance, is used in Japanese to indicate a polite refusal. Takahashi & Beebe (1987, p. 133) report a situation where Mr. Sato, the late prime minster of Japan, in 1974, was asked by President Nixon, the president of USA, if he would agree to a certain policy regarding the export of fabrics to the U.S. Mr. Sato's answer *'Zenshoshimasu'* was literally translated to President Nixon

as *'I'll take care of it'* which is considered a polite way for refusal in Japan and which does not achieve the same function in English. As a consequence, to such a misunderstanding and such a pragmalinguistic failure, President Nixon, according to his misinterpretation of the situation, got angry that the Japanese did not fulfill their promises.

Semantically/Syntactically Non-equivalent Structures

Pragmalinguistic failure may also occur when transferring semantically/syntactically non-equivalent structures of one language to another. That is, a certain linguistic structure may be used in one language, yet, in another language may be entirely lacking. For example, Blum-Kulka (1983) points out that in the English language, tag questions are used as a mitigating device to soften the force of a message. *'You'll do it, won't you'*, for instance, in English is softer than *'you'll do it';* however, in Hebrew, there are no tag questions. Thus, the aforementioned message becomes vague for a Hebrew hearer. Similarly, a clear example of this point is given by Davis (1987) as a fixed formula in one language does not necessarily have an equivalent formula in the target language. For example, Davis reports that in Moroccan Arabic, the formula */la bas ʕlik/ 'no harm on you'* which is used to wish someone a speedy recovery from a disease has no such semantic formula in English; instead, another formula is needed to convey a meaning as close and as appropriate in English as it is in Moroccan Arabic. In this case, the English formula *'hope you get well soon'*, even though is considered as the closest equivalent, is not considered as an accurate equivalent to the previously mentioned */la bas ʕlik/* because */la bas ʕlik/* is usually used in spoken genres, however, *'hope you get well soon'* is usually used in written genres (letters) only (Davis, 1987, p. 80). It is, further, well noticed that the aforementioned case is not only restricted to Moroccan Arabic, it also applies to all Arabic dialects. Moreover, Davis illustrates that a formula such as *'/lla jtbbat lɣɘrs/'* in Moroccan Arabic which literally means *(may God make the plant grow)* and which is said to wish a newly married couple the joys of parenthood does not have an English equivalent and, further, does not conform to the same context. In line with Blum-Kulka's (1983) and Davis's (1987) examples of the transfer of non-equivalent structures, Kasper and Schmidt (1996) report, according to (Miles, 1994), that there is no exclamatory question such as *'what is this beauty!'* which acts as a compliment in Egyptian Arabic; such a construction would cause confusion to a native English speaker prompting him/her to give an answer as if it were an actual question.

Pragmatic Failure of Lexical Devices

In line with Thomas's (1983) notice of the possible pragmatic failure and ambiguity on the word level, a lexical device could have a certain meaning in one language, yet, act differently in another. In this respect, Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993), point out that learners may know a lexical item or a sentence structure, yet, use it inappropriately and fail to convey the intended meaning. The word "sorry" in Japanese, for example, is used to express gratitude unlike its use in the English language that is for apology. Eisenstein and Bodman (1993) report an example of such a case when a Japanese employee, who was offered a raise in his job, responded with *'I'm sorry, I will try harder in the future.'* The Japanese employee's reply "sorry" was to express his deep gratitude. In expressing

gratitude, the Japanese people would use "sorry" because thank you -in the Japanese language- is not sincere enough. Hence, transferring L1 properties into L2 may be bewildering for the native speaker. Richards & Sukwiwat (1983, p. 116), likewise, report a similar case in which a Japanese learner of English expressed gratitude with *'sorry'* to a native English speaker which resulted in miscommunication and initiated the hearer to ask *'why sorry'* as in the following example:

E: Look what I've got for you!

JE: Oh!, I'm sorry

E: Why sorry?

Another example for the inappropriate use of a lexical device is evident in Garcés (1995) who reports that a Spanish learner of English (SE) replied with *'well'* in the following example in an attempt to accept an invitation; not carrying the same function in English, the word *'well'* conveyed a vague message to the native speaker (E). Garcés points out that the miscommunication was due to L1 transfer of a lexical device that fails to carry the same function to L2:

E: Will you be coming to my party on Saturday?

SE: Well

E: Well what?

Pragmalinguistic transfer

Even though cross-cultural pragmatics has been widely examined in the literature, pragmalinguistic transfer has been the core of only few studies. House (1988), for example, reported negative pragmalinguistic transfer from L1 into L2 in her investigation in pragmalinguistic errors of German learners of English. According to House, German learners use the expression *'excuse me'* to express apology which does not convey the same function in English. In the German Language *'Entschuldigen',* which literally means *'excuse me',* is used to express apology and is, further, collocated with the word *'pitte',* which literally means *'please'.* Such collocation when is negatively transferred from German (L1) to English (L2) as *'excuse me, please'* fails to function as an apology. Like House, Blum-Kulka (1983) has explored pragmalinguistic transfer of Hebrew learners of English; she introduced examples that show the inappropriate transfer of L1 strategies from Hebrew to English. Blum-Kulka reported that in English a speaker may request a hearer to do him/her a favor by saying *'will (would) you do it?';* in Hebrew, however, this formula is used to ask for "information" rather than an "action" and would be misinterpreted by a Hebrew hearer and answered by *'yes or no'* rather than fulfilling the request. Rather, the formula *'is it possible to get ...?'* in Hebrew is the conventionalized way for requesting an action to be done. Likewise, the speech act *'would you like to do ...?'* in English is conventionalized for asking for one's willingness for a certain action. In Hebrew, however, *'are you ready (prepared) to do ...?'* is the linguistic realization for the same function. Moreover, according to Blum-Kulka (1983), the formula *'I would like to ...'*

in English is used as a polite request. Unlike English, the same formula in Hebrew is used as a hypothetical situation somewhat close to the English *'I wish I could…'*. Consequently, in Hebrew, the sentence *'I would like to go to the cinema'* means that the speaker wishes to go to the cinema but he/she cannot.

Pragmalinguistics in Writing

Pragmalinguistics has been investigated in speaking more extensively than in writing. Over and above, the sources of investigating pragmalinguistics in writing are quite rare. To reiterate, there is a dearth of studies, to the researcher's best knowledge, conducted to identify pragmalinguistic errors in writing. The importance of investigating pragmalinguistics in writing lies in teaching learners to avoid the inappropriate use of sentence constructions or lexical devices which may have a different meaning than the intended one, may confuse the reader or may lead to message ambiguity. Below are two of the most important studies conducted on pragmalinguistics in writing; the first study (Kourilova, 2012) is conducted in science reporting while the second study (Muir, 2011) is conducted in EFL writing.

Pragmalinguistics in Science Reporting

Kourilova (2012), in a rare study that deals with pragmatics in writing generally and with pragmatics in science-reporting in particular, reports on some of the most vital pragmatic errors non-native speakers (NNS) of English encounter when writing their scientific reports and researches. Kourilova refutes the claim that "mastery of vocabulary and syntax" is the key to a successful communication and attributes the majority of the failure in reporting and/or conveying a researcher's intended meaning to pragmatic issues:

> Misinterpretation of messages is to a great extent due to the NNS's pragmatic failure, i.e. lack of ability to grasp how resources of a language code are put to use in the production of scientific discourse. The language code is highly systematic, well established and relatively easy to learn. Yet the principles, strategies and conventions that govern the use of the code in producing actual messages and discourse resulting in communicative success are hard to classify, systematize and acquire (p. 105).

Kourilova (2012, p. 105) asserts that NNS usually transfer their Mother Tongue's language "discoursal patterns" to the writing of Academic English. Kourilova, further, explains some of the major pragmatic issues that NNS of English face which usually lead to communicating a different message than the intended one, and hence, lead to a misunderstanding of the researcher's findings. Kourilova reports some of NNS frequent misuses of pragmalinguistic issues, viz. *extratemporal values of tenses*, *lexical devices* and use of some *conjuncts.*

First, Kourilova explains the importance of learning the extratemporal values of tenses and states that tenses have specific functions in specific contexts in science-reporting. For example, the use of the present simple tense in the introduction section of a research means that the findings are unreliable and need no further efforts to examine. Moreover, the use of the present perfect tense in the discussion section signals high validity of the

findings of other researchers, and hence, should not be used to refer to the researcher's own findings.

Secondly, Kourilova illustrates that the use of lexical devices may pose difficulty for NNS. For example, the verb *'suggest'* which indicates doubt and disagreement when it is used in the simple past, indicates high probability when it is used with the present perfect. Thirdly, Kourilova points out that the use of some conjuncts may also cause confusion to NNS. For example, *'on the contrary/yet'* and *'even so'* cannot be used interchangeably in science reporting because *on the contrary/yet* show dissimilarity between two symmetrical statuses; however, *even so* shows dissimilarity between asymmetrical statuses indicating overpower of one status to the other (i.e. *'The above discussed drugs can help diabetic patients in many ways. Even so, their adverse effects would act too viscously to justify long-term administration'*). Moreover, the use of *'nevertheless/nonetheless'* cannot be replaced by *'on the contrary'* because even though *'on the contrary',* like *'nevertheless/nonetheless',* may indicate dissimilarity, it carries a message of an unexpected negative correlation between two statuses.

The above examples and many others reported in Kourilova's (2012) study show the high importance of pragmalinguistic competence for NNS for an appropriate reporting of researches. In like manner, Muir's (2011) study shows how important pragmalinguistic competence is for EFL learners in writing their essays.

Pragmalinguistics in EFL Writing

Muir (2011, p. 256) investigated pragmalinguistic failure in the writings of junior high school EFL learners whose first language is Chinese and have been studying English for more than 6 years. He collected 34 essays with different prompts. He found that pragmalinguistic errors were found frequently in their writing; it was, further, found that the most prominent cause for pragmalinguistic failure was transfer from the first language, Chinese, to the English language. Muir, further, attributed such pragmalinguistic failure to the students' lack of linguistic proficiency which plays "an unignorable role" in producing a native-like language. The data collected was analyzed and the pragmalinguistic errors were categorized into *verbose appositions, combination of two subordinate clauses, Misunderstandings of words, Chinese construction of sentences, Independent subordinate clauses,* and *the omission of relative pronouns.*

Pragmalinguistic errors, according to the review of literature, may hence stem from transfer of a speech act (Thomas, 1983), transfer of semantically/syntactically equivalent structures (Thomas, 1983), transfer of semantically/syntactically non-equivalent structures (Blum-Kulka, 1983), construction of erroneous structures (Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986), inappropriate use of lexical devices (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993) and (Garcés, 1995). Thus, the researcher, based on the previously mentioned data, contends that pragmalinguistic failure in writing could be defined as failure to convey the intended meaning of the writer by producing ambiguous, confusing or incomprehensible sentences due to misuse/ill-formation/L1 transfer of sentence constructions or lexical devices.

METHODOLOGY

The Research Design

The researcher used a quantitative design where quantitative analyses were used to show the frequencies of the different types of pragmalinguistic errors, to draw conclusions with regards to the causes of pragmalinguistic errors, and to compare between the frequencies of errors produced by intermediate- *vs.* advanced-level students.

The Sample

A total of 92 freshmen and junior English learners who were studying English as a foreign language in an Egyptian University in 2014 participated in this study; 44 of the students were intermediate-level students (ILS); whereas the other 48 students were advanced-level students (ALS). All students were placed in intermediate- or advanced-level classes according to their placement test scores.

Data

Data Collection

Individually written argumentative essays were collected from 92 intermediate- and advanced-level students. Both ILS and ALS were given prompts to write their individual argumentative essays on. The intermediate-level students' (ILS) prompt was *"Is it acceptable to experiment on animals?"* While the advanced-level students' (ALS) prompt was *'Should internet be used in the classroom?'* The students were instructed to write a five-paragraph essay in class in a one-hour time limit.

Data Assessment

The data were assessed according to the following two criteria:

a) The taxonomy of pragmalinguistic errors (detailed below).
b) Four native English speakers who were asked to rate the appropriateness of errors via Google forms via https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1imByIqh9u-UTF72_RZCr-YvE9oKrG8rnsY_tbIgenjs/viewform and https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1ibJABwd2rmWyHhdV9FrF9CbxFxdNr_Qe8w0nv5h7P1U/viewform . The researcher sought the opinion of Native Speakers' of different nationalities in order to account for different varieties of English and discrepancies that may exist between some of the dialects.

Procedures of Data Analysis

The data were categorized to *Erroneous Construction of Sentences*, *Arabic Construction of Sentences* and *Lexical Errors* which in turn was divided into *Literal Translation Errors*, *Multiple-Meaning Word Errors*, *Near Synonym Errors* and *Lexical Collocation Errors*. The categories' names were adapted from various studies except for *Erroneous Construction of Sentences* which was developed based on the nature of certain errors observed by the researcher. The rest of the categories' names were adapted as follows: *Arabic*

Construction of Sentences was named after Muir's 'Chinese construction of sentences' (2011, pp. 256-258). *Lexical Errors* was a modification of Muir's 'misunderstanding of words' (2011, p. 256) and were, moreover, sub-divided into the following sub-categories: *Literal Translation Errors, Multiple-Meaning Word Errors* which were adopted from Chebchoub (2006, p. 7), *Near Synonym Errors* which was adopted from Shalaby, Yahya & El-Komi (2009, p. 79), and *Lexical Collocation Errors* which were adopted from Mohammed (2005, p. 5). The categories are defined along with examples provided below.

Procedures

Individually written argumentative essays were collected from 92 intermediate- and advanced-level students. Both ILS and ALS were given prompts to write their individual argumentative essays on. To answer the first question, *'What is/are the main cause(s) of pragmalinguistic errors?'*, the researcher first analyzed the 92 essays to identify pragmalinguistic errors and categorize them according to the Data Analysis mentioned above. Then the researcher, based on the errors detected, investigated the main cause behind pragmalinguistic errors by analyzing the students' mistakes and grouping them to observe the most prominent factors which led the students to producing pragmalinguistic errors. To answer the second question *'To what extent is there a difference between intermediate- and advanced-level learners with regards to the frequency of occurrence of pragmalinguistic errors in their writings?'*, the researcher made a comparison between the frequency of pragmalinguistic errors made by intermediate-level students (ILS) and the frequency of pragmalinguistic errors made by advanced-level students (ALS). The comparison was made between the total number of errors of each group as well as between the types and sub-types of the pragmalinguistic errors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results and Discussion of Pragmalinguistic Errors

The first aim of the study was to identify the causes of pragmalinguistic errors made by students in their writings post analyzing the types of pragmalinguistic errors committed. Accordingly, both ILS and ALS were given prompts to write argumentative essays on which allowed the researcher to investigate and categorize the pragmalinguistic errors. Based on four native speakers' ratings, if a student's production is judged by at least one of the raters to be a non-target like form or judged to pose a level of confusion, it is considered a pragmalinguistic error. It was found that both ILS and ALS made the same types of errors which are *Erroneous Construction of Sentences*, *Arabic Construction of Sentences* and *Lexical Errors* which is divided hereby into *Literal Translation Errors*, *Multiple-Meaning Words Errors*, *Near Synonym Errors* and *Lexical Collocation Errors*. Below is a sample analysis for the pragmalinguistic errors.

Erroneous Construction of Sentences

> **Definition:** *A wrong target language sentence construction albeit following its syntactic and semantic rules. Further, they are not influenced by the student's native language constructions.*

Examples:

1- **If animal testing continues to be imagine <u>a nature disorder</u> to occur soon,** *'a nature disorder to occur'* might mean that *there is a natural disaster that will prevail/take place* or it might mean that *testing on animals may cause ecological imbalance.*

2- **<u>Habitats are made on a large scale</u> to protect such animals and make sure that they are far away from extinction,** , the researcher found difficulties to provide a suggested meaning for *'habitats are made on a large scale'* due to the fact that the sentence construction used is entirely incomprehensible.

3- **I personally believe that internet should be allowed in classrooms as <u>it benefit a big cause</u> as teaching and for students to deal with internet for upcoming careers**, the student might have meant by *'it benefit a big cause'* that *internet serves a noble purpose*; yet, it remains unclear.

Arabic Construction of Sentences

Definition: *A sentence construction which is a non-target-like form construction and which is influenced by the students' native language (colloquial/standard Arabic).*

Examples:

1- **<u>Extinction will remove some species of animals from the surface of earth,</u>** the sentence construction might possibly mean that *extinction is a result to the reduction of the number of species on earth*. Yet, the student used *'remove some species'* followed by *'surface of earth'* influenced by the Arabic language in which a speaker uses the phrase *'remove from the surface of earth'* /jʃelhum min ʕala wiʃ ʔilʔarḍˤ/, to indicate the end of someone/something, especially in threatening situations.

2- **I personally see that it can be proven by contradiction that <u>running after information </u>will not teach students how important knowledge is**, the student used *'running after information'* influenced by the Arabic /jigriː wara ʔilmaʕluːmat/ in an attempt to convey the meaning of *seeking information.* Anecdotally, /jigriː wara/ is usually used in Arabic to indicate exerting effort in seeking something.

3- **Students take enough time to try and understand on their own, they do not <u>"work their brains"</u> enough**, the student wanted to convey that *students do not exert enough effort*, yet, he/she used the phrase *'work their brains'* transferred from the Arabic /jiʃaɣalu muxuhum/.

Lexical Error: are sub-categorized to the following types:

Literal Translation Errors

Definition: *A word used in the target language that is literally translated from the student's native language (colloquial/standard Arabic).*

Examples:

1- **Doing experiments on animals is acceptable for learning only and not joking,** the student wanted to convey that doing experiments on animals is acceptable if they are done for noble purpose such as learning rather than *immoral/trivial* purposes;   instead,   the   student   used   the word *'joking'* /hiza:r/ in an attempt to convey *immoral/trivial purposes* as /hiza:r/ could be used in Arabic to refer to an unserious talk, action or situation.

2- **Human's life is too expensive, do not waste it by experimenting medicine on them,** the student intended to mean by *'human's life is too expensive'* /ɣalja/ that humans' lives are valuable; yet, the student inappropriately transferred the word /ɣalja/ which literally means*expensive*, and which could also be used informally in Arabic to refer to someone/something as *valuable*, to the above mentioned English context.

Multiple-Meaning Words Errors

Definition: *A native language (Arabic) word corresponds to two distinct meanings or more in the target language (English) and, subsequently used in two different contexts; However, a student misuses one of the English equivalents for this Arabic word in the context of the other.*

Examples:

1- **Studies proved that animal testing and humans agree only 5-25% of the time**, the student used the word *'agree'* influenced by the Arabic /juwafiq/ which could either mean *agree* as in /juwafiq ʕala tˤalab/ or could mean *match* as in /juwafiq ʔalmuwasafat/. Hence, the student should have used the word *match* instead of *'agree'* in order to convey that *the genes of humans and animals match*. Moreover, this sentence is much more confusing and could even have a totally different meaning as it was interpreted differently by one of the Native Speakers as follows: *if the test is proved to be successful on animals, not necessarily will it be successful on humans nor will it yield the same results*. Thus, this sentence poses a great difficulty in comprehending due to L1 influence and inappropriate usage of its words.

2- **Doing experiments on animals is a very vital idea. The importance of this is to avoid publishing of diseases and develop new medicines**, the student confused the word *'publish'* with the word *spread* due to the fact that both of them can be replaced in Arabic with the word /junʃur/ as in / junʃur ʔalxabar/ and /junʃur ʔalʔamradˤ/, respectively. Hence, the student should have used the word *spread* to refer to diseases.

Near Synonym Errors

Definition: *A target language word that is close in meaning to another target language word is inappropriately used by a student instead of the other one.*

Examples:

1- **<u>Examining</u> medicines on animals may let the human detect the bad side effect of the medicine without wasting human beings' life**, the student used *'examining'* medicine in an attempt to mean *testing.*

2- **Some people <u>look</u> that doing experiments on animals is very harmful because it may lead animals to die or make any harm to them but others <u>look</u> it's very important and useful**, the student used the word *'look'* instead of *see* which was intended to convey the meaning of *believe.*

Lexical Collocation Errors are divided into:

Non-contextual Lexical Collocation Errors

Definition: *An inappropriate word choice where the use of a word (noun) does not collocate with the range of words (i.e. verb/adjective) allowed for it in the English language.*

Examples:

1- **Researchers have done all over the world to examine a product, drug or medicine for <u>killing</u> a <u>disease</u>**, the student used the word *'kill'* to refer to diseases; however, the words *beat* or *conquer* should be used instead.

2- **Within the past decade, lots of new <u>viruses</u> <u>appeared</u>**, the word *emerged* should have been used instead of *'appeared'*

Contextual Lexical Collocation Errors

Definition: *A linguistically correct collocation is used in a different context conveying a different meaning than the intended one.*

Examples:

1- **Examining medicines on animals may let the human detect the bad side effect of the medicine without <u>wasting</u> human beings' <u>life</u>**, the student should have used the word *endanger* instead of *'wasting'* to convey that *medicine needs to be tested to make sure that its side effects do not endanger humans' lives*. Instead, the student used the word *'waste'* to refer to humans' lives.

3- **Not <u>applying</u> to this <u>students</u> will not be able to study nor concentrate and will lose the true meanings of education**, even though the transitive verb apply could be used with a human subject like *students*, the sentence should have had a different structure (subj. + V. + obj.) as in *Judges apply a law* or *graduates apply for a job*. Over and above, the student, in this context, meant to use abiding by instead of *'applying'.*

Causes of Pragmalinguistic Errors

After categorizing and analyzing the errors, it was noticed that the total number of pragmalinguistic errors for the ILS (intermediate-level students) was 54 and the percentages of pragmalinguistic types of errors were as follows: 22.22 % for *Erroneous Construction of Sentences*, 25.92% for *Arabic Construction of Sentences* and 51.85% for *Lexical Errors* which is divided hereby into 18.51%, 9.25%, 9.25% and 14.81% for *Literal Translation Errors*, *Multiple-Meaning Word Errors*, *Near Synonym Errors* and *Lexical Collocation Errors,* respectively. The numbers and percentages of the ILS pragmalinguistic errors are shown in table 1 and figure 2 below.

Table 1. Pragmalinguistic Errors in the Writings of ILS

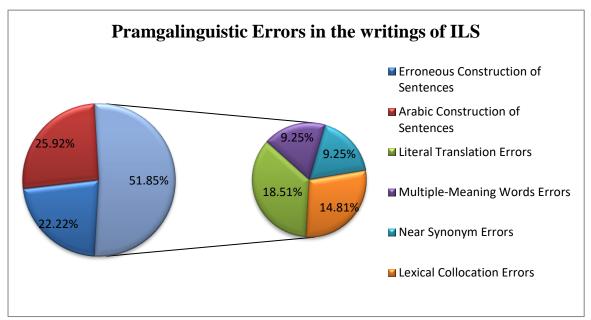| Type of Pragmalinguistic Errors in the Writings of ILS	Number	Percentage
Erroneous Construction of Sentences	12	22.22 %
Arabic construction of sentences	14	25.92%
Lexical errors	28	51.85%
Literal Translation Errors	10	18.51%
Multiple-Meaning Word Errors	5	9.25%
Near Synonym Errors	5	9.25%
Lexical Collocation Errors	8	14.81%

Figure 2. Pragmalinguistic Errors in the Writings of ILS

Figure 2 above shows the types and percentages of pragmalinguistic errors made by ILS. The figure shows that, on the one hand, *Erroneous Construction of Sentences* errors are almost as frequent as *Arabic Construction of Sentences* errors and constitute 25.92% and 22.22% of the total ILS' errors, respectively; on the other hand, *Lexical Errors* exceed 50% of the total errors of ILS. Upon analyzing the percentages of *Lexical Errors*, it is evident that while *Near Synonym Errors* and *Multiple-Meaning Word Errors* have relatively low percentages, less than 10% each, *Literal Translation Errors* have a slightly higher (14.81%) percentage and *Lexical Collocation Errors* have, to an extent, a notably higher

percentage (18.51%). Since *Lexical Errors* account for more than half of the errors, it is predicted that the possibility of making *Erroneous Construction of Sentences* may even be higher for intermediate students than found in this study provided assigning a harder topic for students to write on.

A closer examination of the numbers and percentages provided above in table 1 and figure 2 reveals that 53.68% of the total ILS' errors are due to L1-influence. ILS are influenced by their mother tongue Arabic in producing the target language English. Consequently, ILS frequently make *Arabic Construction of Sentences* errors, *Literal Translation Errors*, and *Multiple-Meaning Word Errors*. In *Arabic Construction of Sentences* errors, students construct sentences according to the Arabic rules and formulaic expressions, in *Literal Translation Errors*, students are influenced by their mother tongue lexis and literally translate Arabic words which have different equivalents in the English language, and in *Multiple-Meaning Word Errors*, the students are confused between two distinct English words that have two distinct meanings and usages in English, yet, have the same equivalent in the Arabic Language. Figure 3 below shows the high percentage of L1-influence which is almost half of their total errors and is as high as all other pragmalinguistic errors combined.
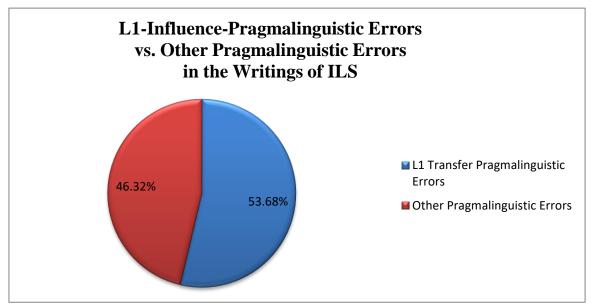

Figure 3. L1-Influence-Pragmalinguistic Errors vs. Other Pragmalinguistic Errors in the Writings of ILS

In a similar fashion, after analyzing ALS' errors, the results revealed that the total number of pragmalinguistic errors for ALS is 25 errors which were assigned the following percentages: 8% for *Erroneous Construction of Sentences*, 44 % for *Arabic Construction of Sentences*, and 48% for *Lexical Errors*. Further, *Lexical Errors* was divided into 4 % for *Literal Translation Errors*, 8 % for *Multiple-Meaning Word Errors*, 16 % for *Near Synonym Errors* and 20 % for *Lexical Collocation Errors*. The numbers and percentages of ALS' errors are shown in table 2 and figure 4 below.

Table 2. Pragmalinguistic Errors in the Writings of ALS

Type of Pragmalinguistic Error in the Writings of ALS	Number	Percentage
Erroneous Construction of Sentences	2	8 %
Arabic construction of sentences	11	44 %
Lexical errors	12	48%
Literal Translation Errors	1	4 %
Multiple-Meaning Word Errors	2	8%
Near Synonym Errors	4	16%
Lexical Collocation Errors	5	20%

Figure 4. Pragmalinguistic Errors in the Writings of ALS

Figure 4 above illustrates pragmalinguistic errors of ALS and shows that the least pragmalinguistic errors made are those of *Erroneous Construction of Sentences*. Conversely, the figure shows that, like ILS, ALS' *Lexical Errors* constitute half of their total errors. Similar to ILS, ALS most frequent lexical errors are *Lexical Collocation Errors*; yet, unlike ILS whose *Literal Translation Errors* account for the second highest percentage, ALS' highest second percentage of *Lexical Errors* are *Near Synonym Errors* which reveals that even though ALS have a more advanced level of proficiency than ILS, they seem to confuse between near synonyms in English and seem to use them inadequately. It is also noticed that ALS' *Arabic Construction of Sentences* errors have a high percentage -about only 6% less than half of the total errors- which cannot be overlooked. It is remarkable to note that *Arabic Construction of Sentences* errors suggest the prevalence of L1 influence in the writings of ALS.
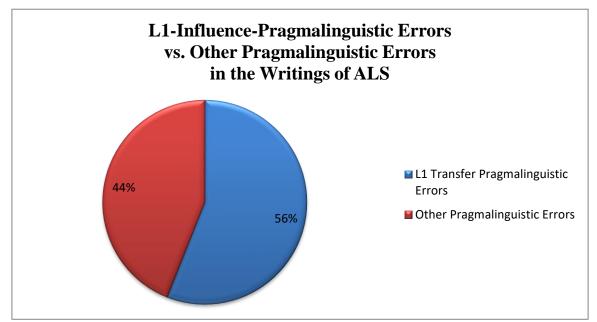
Figure 5. L1-Influence-Pragmalinguistic Errors vs. Other Pragmalinguistic Errors in the Writings of ALS

Figure 5 above illustrates L1-influence errors vs. other pragmalinguistic errors of ALS. It is of high importance to note that ALS make approximately as high percentage of L1-influence errors as ILS make despite their advanced levels of proficiency. Combining L1-influence subdivisions which are *Arabic Construction of Sentences*, *Literal Translation Errors* and *Multiple-Meaning Word Errors*, it is found that they constitute 56% of ALS' total pragmalinguistic errors. Even though, and inexplicably, ALS' *Literal Translation Errors* and *Multiple-Meaning Word Errors* are relatively few (less than 12% combined), *Arabic Construction of Sentences,* independently, accounts for almost half of their total errors. It seems that, on the one hand, L1 does not highly influence ALS' lexis, yet, remarkably influences their sentence constructions. On the other hand, ALS' mastery of the correct use of L2 lexical items is imperfect; accordingly, there are other frequent lexical errors such as *Lexical Collocation Errors* and *Near Synonym Errors*.

After the previous analyses of ILS' and ALS' pragmalinguistic errors, and as shown in figures 2, 3, 4 and 5 above, it can, hence, be concluded that the most prominent causes of both ILS' and ALS' pragmalinguistic errors are *L1 transfer* followed by *insufficient linguistic proficiency* which is most noticeable in *Lexical Collocation Errors*. The findings of this study go in line with Muir's (2011) findings who investigated pragmalinguistic errors in the writings of EFL learners, as previously mentioned in the review of literature, and found that the main causes of pragmalinguistic errors were L1 transfer and linguistic proficiency. This study's findings also go along with the majority of other researches, previously mentioned in the review of literature, in which L1 transfer was a main cause of pragmalinguistic errors. To reiterate, Thomas (1983) attributed pragmalinguistic errors to transfer of speech acts or transfer of semantically/syntactically equivalent structures, Blum-Kulka (1983) attributed pragmalinguistic errors to transfer of non-equivalent structures, Eisenstein & Bodman (1993) and Garcés (1995) found proof of lexical items' transfer, and House (1988) attributed some of the errors to collocation transfer.

Pragmalinguistic Errors and Level of Proficiency

The second aim of the research was to find out if there is a significant difference between different levels of language proficiency with regards to the frequency of pragmalinguistic errors. Thus, a comparison between the total errors made by ILS and ALS was made and it revealed that, out of 79 total pragmalinguistic errors for both groups, 54 of them were made by ILS which account for 68.35% of the overall errors; furthermore, 25 of the errors were made by ALS which account for 31.64% of the overall errors made by the two groups. The ratio of making pragmalinguistic errors for ILS to ALS is about 2:1 which indicates that the possibility of making a pragmalinguistic error for intermediate-level students is twice as high as the possibility for advanced-level students. Accordingly, and expectedly, the comparison might suggest that the more proficient a student is, the fewer pragmalinguistic errors are to be made. Table 3 and Figure 6 below show the comparison between the frequencies of the three major categories of pragmalinguistic errors, namely *Erroneous Construction of Sentences*, *Arabic Construction of Sentences* and *Lexical Errors* made by ILS and ALS.

Table 3. Pragmalinguistic Errors in the writings of ILS vs. ALS

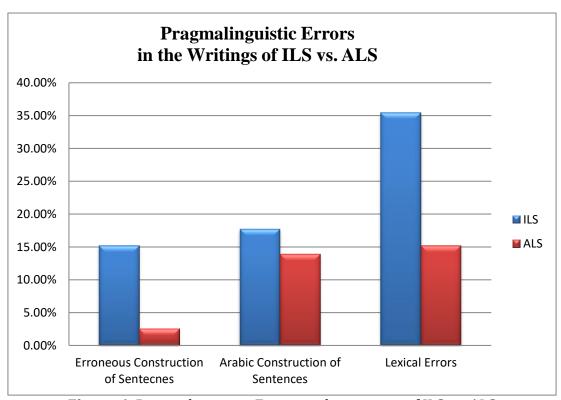| Type of Pragmalinguistic Error	ILS	ALS
	n (%)	n (%)
Erroneous Construction of Sentences	12 (15.18)	2 (2.53)
Arabic construction of sentences	14 (17.72)	11 (13.92)
Lexical errors	28 (35.44)	12 (15.18)

Figure 6. Pragmalinguistic Errors in the writings of ILS vs. ALS

Figure 6 above shows that *Lexical Errors* account for the highest number of errors for both ILS and ALS; yet, ILS *Lexical Errors* percentage is remarkably higher than both ALS *Lexical Errors* and ILS other errors. The figure also shows that *Erroneous Construction of Sentences* are the lowest number of errors for both ILS and ALS; yet ILS *Erroneous Construction of Sentences* percentage is notably (12.65%) higher than ALS *Erroneous Construction of Sentences*. Nevertheless, and surprisingly, ILS and ALS produce almost the same number of *Arabic Construction of Sentences* errors, only 3.8% higher percentage for ILS over ALS; and since it was also noted in figure 5 previously that *L1-influence* represents more than half of the total ALS errors, it can be concluded that an advanced-level of language proficiency, even though it might lessen the frequency of overall pragmalinguistic errors, does not preclude the frequency of L1-influence-pragmalinguistic errors particularly L1-influence of sentence constructions. Additionally, A Chi-square analysis was performed, due to the nominal and categorical nature of the data, which shows that there is no significant difference between ILS and ALS with regards to the overall pragmalinguistic errors made (χ^2 = 3.765, p = 0.15). The Chi-square analysis, hence, confirms previous research, as mentioned above, indicating that an advanced-level of L2 proficiency does not necessarily guarantee concomitant pragmatic/pragmalinguistic proficiency.

Moreover, a comparison between ILS and ALS frequencies of sub-categories of *Lexical Errors* is illustrated in table 4 and figure 7 below. The figure shows that, out of the total *Lexical Errors*, *Lexical Collocation Errors* of both ILS and ALS are remarkably high; while *Lexical Collocation Errors* are the highest percentage of errors for ALS, they account for the second highest percentage of errors for ILS. However, unlike ALS whose *Literal Translation Errors* are the lowest of all errors, ILS *Literal Translation Errors* are the highest of ILS *Lexical Errors*. The figure also shows that ILS make as many *Multiple-Meaning Word Errors* as *Near Synonyms Errors*; in contrast, ALS make fewer *Multiple-Meaning Word Errors* than ILS. Additionally, ALS *Multiple-Meaning Word Errors* are less than both ALS *Lexical Collocation Errors* and *Near Synonyms Errors*. It is worth noting that the reason ILS *Literal Translation Errors* is higher than ALS *Literal Translation Errors* could be attributed to the wide range of vocabulary acquired by ALS since their language proficiency is higher than ILS which enables them to use target-language lexical items. Conversely, lacking sufficient words to express their intended meaning, ILS literally translate their L1 lexical items into L2. Nonetheless, ALS, like ILS, seem to have a certain level of confusion between the target language vocabularies and appear to misuse some of them and confuse between their near synonyms. Furthermore, a 2-tailed Fisher's Exact Test was performed, considering that the frequency of some cells was less than 5, which shows, like the overall of pragmalinguistic errors, that there is no significant difference between ILS and ALS with regards to the frequency of types of lexical errors made by the two groups at a p-value of 0.3071. This provides evidence and emphasizes that an advanced-level of linguistic proficiency does not guarantee an advanced level of pragmalinguistic proficiency.

Table 4. Lexical Errors in the writings of ILS vs. ALS

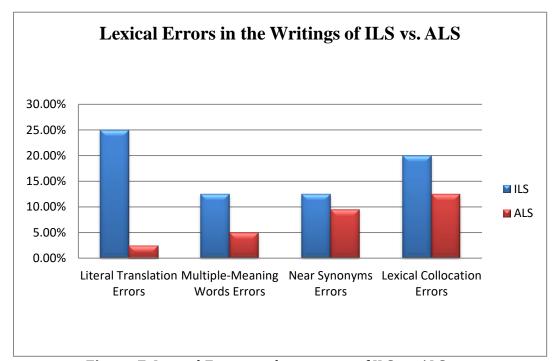| Lexical Errors	ILS	ALS
	n (%)	n (%)
Literal Translation Errors	10 (25)	1 (2.5)
Multiple-Meaning Word Errors	5 (12.5)	2 (5)
Near Synonym Errors	5 (12.5)	4 (10)
Lexical Collocation Errors	8 (20)	5 (12.5)
Total	28 (70)	12 (30)

Figure 7. Lexical Errors in the writings of ILS vs. ALS

The high rate of both ILS and ALS *Lexical Collocation Errors* shown in figure 7 above, goes along with Nesselhauf's (2003) findings who extracted and analyzed collocations from 32 argumentative essays written by advanced German-speaking university students of English. Nesselhauf's reference to collocations is the closest to *Word Collocation* errors identified in this paper. According to Nesselhauf a phraseological definition of collocation was adopted rather than a frequency-based one. In this respect, she distinguished between collocations and other word combinations by "arbitrary restriction on substitutability" criterion. In other words, she distinguished between semantically substitutable elements which she referred to as *'free combinations'* and restricted substitutable elements which she referred to as *'collocations'*. Accordingly, Nesselhauf developed a classification for collocation based on these aforementioned two criteria (Nesselhauf, 2003, pp. 224-225). Nesselhauf found out that word collocation errors are mostly due to wrong choice of verbs. Similarly, both ILS and ALS *Lexical Collocation Errors* are mostly attributed to wrong choice of verbs. Anecdotally, the frequency of *Lexical Collocation Errors* made by both ILS and ALS highlight the importance of teaching vocabulary within a context because "collocations are not entirely predictable only on the

basis of syntactic rules, they should be listed in a lexicon and learned in the same way as single words are" (Palmer, 1938, qtd. in Pecina, 2010, p. 138).

In another study conducted by Mohammed (2005), it was referred to the *free combinations* of collocations in Nesselhauf's work by *open collocations*. Mohammed notes that *open collocations*, unlike *restricted ones* which are fixed, have a wide range of words whith which they could cluster. In his study, Mohammed analyzed collocation errors in the writings of post-intermediate and advanced EFL Arab learners and found out that lexical collocations way exceeded grammatical collocations; moreover, it was found that the majority of lexical collocations errors were verb-noun combinations, along with the findings of Nesselhauf (2003) as well as the findings of this study, while a few percentage was adjective-noun collocations. Additionaly, he classified some of the lexical collocations as contextual collocations, also detected in this study, which are linguistically correct but gave a different meaning than the desired one in the specific context they were written in and which are mainly attributed to L1 transfer, both modern standard variant and non-standard variant.

The relatively lower percentage of *Multiple-Meaning Words Errors* made by ALS compared to ILS could be asserted by Chebchoub (2005) in a study concerned with error analysis of the writings of second language learners in which beginner Arab learners of English, influenced by their L1, produced lexical/semantic errors. As mentioned earlier, and along with Chebchoub notes, an Arabic L1 word may have multiple meanings, yet, two distinct counterparts are needed in English; consequently, this leads students who transfer their L1 to L2 to use an inappropriate English word. Chebchoub attributed Multiple-Meaning words errors in his study, which were produced in a great number, to the students' usual use of glossaries and bilingual dictionaries.Furthermore, Chebchoub detected Literal Translation errors which doubled Multiple-Meaning Words errors. Nonetheless, by the end of their semester, the students made fewer errors. This goes along with the results of this study as it was shown above that advanced students make fewer *Multiple-Meaning Errors* and *Literal Translation Errors* than intermediate students. Additionaly, this study shows that *Literal Translation Errors,* like Chebchoub's findings, almost double *Multiple-Meaning Words Errors* in intermediate learners; yet, in advanced learners, the opposite was found.

It was shown in table 4 and figure 7 that *Literal Translation Errors*, though do not prevail in advanced-level students' writings, prevail in the writings of intermediate-level students and account for the most frequent of their errors. It was also shown that *Literal Translation Errors* are produced in a higher rate than *Near Synonyms Errors* for intermediate-level students. Such findings go along with Shalaby, Yahya and El-Komi's (2009) findings in a study conducted to examine EFL Saudi students' lexical errors. Out of the semantic errors that were identified in their study were Translation from L1 (which corresponds to *Literal Translation Errors* in this study) and Near Synonyms. Their study shows that Translation from L1 errors were the most frequent of semantic errors followed by Lexical Choices with Inappropriate Meaning; the third most frequent type of semantic errors was Near Synonyms, yet, with a much lower rate than the previous two

errors. It is noticed that in Shalaby, Yahya and El-Komi's study as well as in this study, *Literal Translation* of lexical errors outnumber *Near Synonyms* errors. That is, in Shalaby, Yahya and El-Komi's study Translation from L1 errors triple Near Synonyms errors whereas in this study *Literal Translation Errors* double *Near Synonyms Errors* as shown in table 4 and figure 7.

ILS and ALS L1-influence-pragmalinguistic errors' subdivisions are compared and illustrated in table 5, figure 8 and figure 9 below which show that out of the total number of L1-influence-pragmalinguistic errors for both ILS and ALS, ILS' L1-influence-pragmalinguistic errors is more than the double of ALS' L1-influence-pragmalinguistic errors. Upon comparing the different subdivisions of L1-influence-pragmalinguistic errors between ILS and ALS, namely *Arabic Construction of Sentences*, *Literal Translation Errors*, and *Multiple-Meaning Word Errors*, it is observed that, ILS' *Multiple-Meaning Word Errors* are also about twice ALS' *Multiple-Meaning Word Errors*. It is also noticeable that ILS' *Literal Translation Errors* are almost 10 times as high as ALS' *Literal Translation Errors*. However, in contrast to *Multiple-Meaning Word Errors* and *Literal Translation Errors* in which ILS' L1 transfer remarkably outnumbers ALS' L1 transfer, ALS make *Arabic Construction of Sentences* errors almost as many as ILS with only a few percent lower. In light of this, a Chi-square analysis was employed to identify if the difference between the two groups with regards to L1-influence-pragmalinguistic errors was significant. The Chi-square analysis showed that, like all pragmalinguistic errors –major categories and sub-categories of lexical errors- there was no significant difference between the two groups in regards with L1 transfer (χ^2 = 4.189, p = 0.12). This may be interpreted by the remarkable high rate of ALS' L1 transfer of *Arabic Construction of Sentences* which might be the factor that contributes the most to the insignificant difference between the two groups. This, again, provides evidence that an advanced level of language proficiency does not obviate L1 transfer, particularly, for L1 formulae and sentence constructions.

Table 5. L1 Transfer in the Writings of ILS vs. ALS

L1 Transfer	ILS n (%)	ALS n (%)
Arabic Construction of Sentences	14 (32.55)	11 (25.58)
Literal Translation Errors	10 (23.25)	1 (2.32)
Multiple-Meaning Word Errors	5 (11.62)	2 (4.65)
Total	29 (67.44)	14 (32.55)

Total L1 transfer in the Writings of ILS vs. ALS

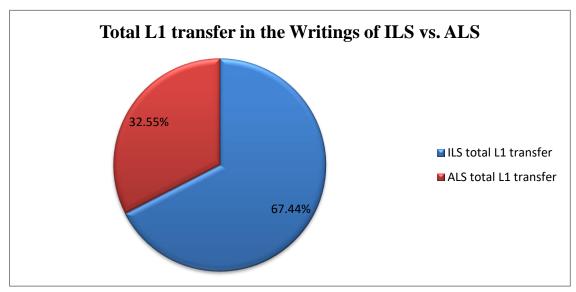**Figure 8**. Total L1 Transfer in the Writings of ILS vs. ALS

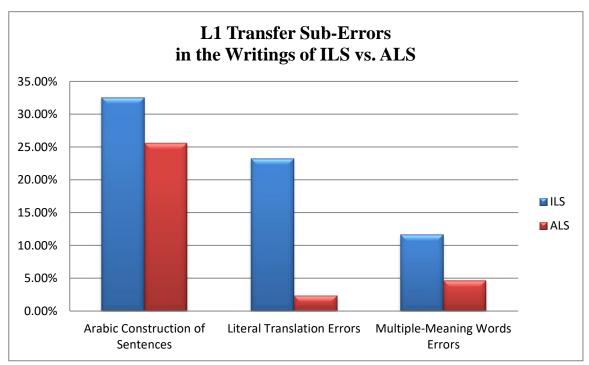**L1 Transfer Sub-Errors in the Writings of ILS vs. ALS**

Figure 9. L1 Transfer Sub Errors in the Writings of ILS vs. ALS

The correlation between L1 transfer and language proficiency has been widely investigated in the literature. On the one hand, some studies show that L1 transfer is positively correlated with language proficiency and argue that lack of proficiency acts as an obstacle to pragmatic transfer while high proficiency enables students to transfer their L1 properties to an L2. On the other hand, other studies argue the reverse. For example, Takahashi/Beebe (1987) pointed out that pragmatic transfer is positively correlated with proficiency levels of L2 learners. They explain it with the fact that proficient learners would have more tools (i.e. lexis, semantics, grammar, etc...) that would enable them to

express their ideas more freely in an L2 and would, hence, be vulnerable to negative pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic transfer. In their study, they reported that Japanese ESL learners produced refusals in the target language with the same forms of their native language. In contrast, Takahashi & Dufon (1989) reported that Japanese ESL beginning learners used indirect strategies in requests, which shows negative transfer of Japanese native language while advanced learners used more direct strategies which in turn corresponded to the target language. Moreover, Robinson (1992) pointed out that ESL Japanese beginners produced refusals closer to their native language than to the target language while advanced learners knew how to manipulate the language to produce more target-like forms. Furthermore, Maeshiba, Yoshinaga, Kasper and Ross (1996) asserted that the more proficient a learner is, the less negative pragmatic transfer occurs.

In this study it was found that, on the one hand, intermediate-level students transfer their first language sentence constructions and lexical items into the target language and their total L1 transfer was 28 errors which account for 53.68% of their total errors. This may show that intermediate-level students lack sufficient L2 knowledge and resort to their first language to produce an L2. Moreover, it was found that advanced-level students also transfer their first language sentence constructions and lexical items into the target language with a total number of 14 errors which account for 56% of their total errors although they acquire the necessary tools for producing an L2. Even though, on the one hand, figure 8 shows that intermediate-level students' total L1 transfer is more than twice that of advanced-level students, which may, deceivingly, indicate that L1 transfer seem to negatively correlate with language proficiency, the inexplicable high rate of transfer of advanced-level students to their mother tongue sentence constructions which is almost as high as intermediate-level students seem to refute such negative correlation and seem to highlight that such correlation cannot be generalized. Over and above, the Chi-square analysis which was performed shows that the difference between the two groups with regards to L1 transfer is not significant which also contradicts the apparent negative correlation. In other words, advanced-level students do not produce significantly less L1 transfer errors than intermediate-level students. On the other hand, a positive correlation cannot be concluded as well. As stated above and as shown in figure 9, L1-influence-pragmalinguistic errors frequencies between ILS and ALS vary in L1 sub-categories errors, namely *Literal Translation Errors, Multiple-Meaning Word Errors* and *Arabic Construction of Sentences*; while *Literal Translation Errors* are produced way more frequently by ILS over ALS, *Arabic Construction of Sentences*, in particular, are of adjacent frequencies. Unfortunately, according to the nature of the data of this study, a correlation test was not possible to be performed. Accordingly, a final and a decisive conclusion of how L1-influence-pragmalinguistic errors correlate with language proficiency cannot be reached.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The aim of this study was to investigate the causes of pragmalinguistic errors made by university EFL learners in writing and to compare between the frequencies of pragmalinguistic errors of different levels of language proficiency. Data were collected

from both intermediate-level and advanced-level university EFL students. A total of 92 essays were collected from both groups who were given prompts to which they responded in a written essay. Further, it was found that both intermediate- and advanced-level EFL learners commit six types of errors: *Erroneous Construction of Sentences, Arabic Construction of Sentences, Literal Translation Errors, Multiple-Meaning Word Errors, Near Synonym Errors and Lexical Collocation Errors*. The results also revealed that the main causes of pragmalinguistic errors were L1 influence followed by insufficient linguistic proficiency. Moreover, pragmalinguistic errors were found to be fewer in intermediate-level students than in advanced-level students; yet, there was no significant difference between the two proficiency levels. Similarly, it was found that intermediate-level students' L1 transfer was as twice as high advanced-level students'; however, this difference did not reach a statistical significance. Furthermore, L1 transfer sub-categories *Literal Translation Errors* were found to be more frequent in the writings of intermediate-level students than in the writings of advanced-level students; whereas *Arabic Construction of Sentences* were produced almost equally by both intermediate-level and advanced-level students.

Practical Implications

Having investigated pragmalinguistic errors in the writings of EFL students and having shown how frequent pragmalinguistic errors are in both intermediate-level and advanced-level students, it is self-evident that being pragmalinguistically competent is essential for effective L2 use and there are several implications in this regard. Firstly, students should study new vocabulary within their contexts and practice as many examples as possible with the different meanings and functions of various words and in different contexts which may particularly help emphasize the distinction between near synonyms. Moreover, students need to avoid L1 transfer and proficiently learn to write their L2 equivalents. Students may expose themselves to different sources of learning an L2 such as reading L2 books, listening to L2 audio, or practicing speaking with proficient teachers and native speakers if possible. Secondly, teachers need to pay attention to correcting such pragmalinguistic errors and guide EFL students to the appropriate construction of sentences and usages of lexical items. Teachers may also broaden the students' horizons by finding sources by which students could learn the appropriateness of using an L2. Furthermore, teachers should incorporate teaching collocations and word connotations to L2 curricula since the beginning of their L2 learning stages to enable them to differentiate between the different usages of lexical items. Thirdly, curricula developers must integrate pragmalinguistic knowledge into L2 curricula, particularly in early learning stages, in order to enable students to be as proficient L2 learners as possible. Fourthly, linguists should provide pragmalinguistic corpora with the most frequent pragmalinguistic mistakes which should be avoided as well as the most frequent L2 formulaic sequences and lexical items usage. Fifthly, with the help of programmers, linguists should provide a program which could help an L2 learner to search for L1 formulae equivalents in an L2; such a program could also provide the different equivalents to L1 lexical items in different contexts. Sixthly, translators should also be pragmalinguistically competent so that they can provide high quality translation and to

produce a comprehensible target language text. Finally, novel writers and journalists should beware pragmalinguistic errors and should enhance their pragmalinguistic knowledge which shall enable them to effectively convey their intended meanings void of any confusion or wrong messages to the readers.

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