



A Discourse Analysis of English-Arabic Cross-Culture Interactions between Arabic Speaking Mother and English Speaking Daughter: An Interactional Sociolinguistics Approach to ESL Teaching

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Abstract

This study focuses on conversations between a Middle Eastern mother and her daughter who live in the United States. They travelled to the United States when the daughter was 3 years old and both have lived there for twelve years. Discourse analysis of conversations between the mother and her daughter, in addition to other speakers at the mosque, reveals the challenges the daughter faces when speaking Arabic due to her insufficient knowledge of Middle Eastern culture despite her comprehension of the linguistic structure of utterances both at the semantic and grammatical level. The findings reinforce Grice's (1989) term *conversational cooperation* that requires mutual comprehension of speakers' intentions which underlie the linguistic level of utterances. By applying these findings on an ESL setting, it follows that ESL learning requires using the usage-based approach to reinforce communicative competence in addition to learning the grammar of the language.

Keywords: intercultural, sociolinguistics, translation, communication, overgeneralization, ESL.

1. Introduction

Second language learning usually takes place in isolation from culture and discourse. The learners put great effort into learning new vocabulary and grammar points of the second language, but not very often get the chance to practice speaking with native speakers in real-life situations. For international students who travel abroad to learn the language in the native speaking country, the native speaker they mostly talk to is the instructor. Despite the teacher's efforts to make language practice in the classroom as realistic as possible, the students as well as the teacher will always be aware that these are classroom activities that may not be used out of the that building. Therefore, the students will most of the time practice the linguistic component of the language more than the socio-contextual one.

As a result, second language learning is generally focused on the linguistic unites of utterances when it should take into consideration learning the utterances' references and meanings. In other words, second language acquisition should be based on understanding the meaning of the sentence in relation to its situational context because utterances are better

understood when their syntactic and referential levels are equally considered. Therefore, the linguistic competence of a second language is better achieved beyond the level of the sentence.

- Learning a second language in isolation from social context results in communication breakdown.
- Lateral translation from one language to another, though may work in some occasions should be avoided in learning a second language.
- Overgeneralization is not recommended because it may result in misinterpretations of the intended message.
- ESL learners should always be encouraged to tackle the given topic within the context and/or culture of the target language.
- First language can facilitate the learning process of the second language.

The interactions under investigation are analyzed in light of Gumperz' (1982) and Goffman's (1981) Interactional Sociolinguistics approach to discourse analysis which focuses on the context in which the utterances are used. In this case, if one of the interlocutors is not familiar with the context in hand, misunderstandings are likely to take place. One example is conversations between individuals who belong to different cultures and the potential challenge they may face that can likely lead to communication breakdown.

This article focuses on analyzing utterances that are produced in interactions between a mother and her daughter who are originally from the Middle East but live in the United States. The analysis is done on the utterances which are produced in two different contexts: by the daughter when talking with her mother, and by the daughter when talking to other Arabic speakers in the mosque with the presence of the mother. Discourse analysis of these conversations highlights the challenges the young daughter faces due to her insufficient knowledge of Middle Eastern culture despite her comprehension of the linguistic structure of Arabic utterances.

The following paragraphs provide an introductory background on the nature of discourse analysis and the approaches developed to study it. In addition, data analysis of mother-daughter conversations is also provided by the use of the interactional sociolinguistics theory.

1.1 *Background*

1.1.1 *What is discourse?*

Discourse can be generally defined as the combination of segments used to create written and spoken means of communication to deliver a message that may not be explicitly conveyed at the grammatical level. According to Matthew's (2005), dictionary definition of discourse, it is "any coherent succession of sentences, spoken or written" (p. 100). In other words, the term *discourse* includes the organization of linguistic components within, above, and below sentence level (Sharma & Sharma, 2010).

Theories that study linguistic form vs. linguistic function have provided different assumptions about the two paradigms. As a result, definitions to the term discourse involve three major parts. One definition is based on the structural form of the language that focuses on analyzing language "above the sentence or above the clause" (Stubbs, 1983: 1). However, discourse can also include meaning below the sentence level (Widdowson, 2004). For example, the utterance "later" used by one of the interlocutors when leaving at the end of the conversation means "I'll see you later". Although the utterance "later" does not constitute a full sentence, it carries full meaning within it. On the other hand, the full sentence "see you later" does not always carry literal meaning; in that it does not necessarily mean that the speaker will actually see the other person at a later time. It is a full sentence used to end a conversation and is not essentially taken to be intended in its exact words.

The second definition is more related to language use and discourse coherence; i.e. functional paradigm of linguistic theory or as Cameron (2001) refers to, *Social Theorists' Discourse*. Lastly, the third definition emphasizes the relationship that holds between both the form and function of language (discourse).

In a more detailed breakdown of the definition of the term discourse, Bloor and Bloor (2007) provide the following major divisions to it:

Definition 1: Discourse involves all the units within a sentence, e.g. words, clauses and phrases.

Definition 2: Discourse is the spoken usage of language.

Definition 3: Discourse is language use in communities of practice.

Definition 4: Discourse involves all means of communication that humans use in their interactions.

Based on the above discussion, discourse is understood as the linguistic behavior in a spoken or written context. The study of that behavior is referred to as discourse analysis.

1.1.2 What is discourse analysis?

As stated above, discourse involves language usage beyond utterance structural boundaries. In this regards, discourse analysis focuses on analyzing language beyond the given utterance rather than the study of syntactic elements within that utterance. Discourse analysis focuses on interpreting language users' messages that are intended to be conveyed in a given conversation by understanding discourse coherence.

The term *Discourse Analysis* was first used by Harris (1952) to refer to the formal methodology used to analyze the pattern of a given text based on its different components. Harris' definition is confirmed by Stubbs (1983) who discusses that discourse analysis is the study of contextual pattern of a sequence of utterances rather than focusing on isolated sentences. This meaning is explained in more details by Chomsky (2002) who states that in order "to understand a sentence we must know more than the analysis of this sentence on each linguistic level. We must also know the reference and meaning of the morphemes or words of which it is composed; naturally, grammar cannot be expected to be of much help here" (Chomsky, 2002: 103).

Leech (2008) provides a similar definition by saying that "knowledge of a language is more than knowledge of individual sentences" (p. 76). Also, Sharma and Sharma (2010) believe that discourse analysis is not limited to the description of linguistic forms in isolation from the purposes and functions that these linguistic forms carry out. It can be taken that discourse analysis is the study of linguistic construction of utterances in relation to the reference of the individual units and the context in which they occur.

It follows that linguistic competence is not sufficient to achieve mutual understanding in spoken and written interactions. This competence needs to be associated to appropriately corresponding contextual knowledge which is based on social and cultural backgrounds in order for the intended messages to be delivered. Accordingly, it is taken that unfamiliarity with contextual paradigms required to handle a specific conversation can result in a breakdown in the communication despite the sufficient mastery of the language's grammar. This can be used to provide a good explanation to the reason why second language learners may encounter some difficulties interacting with native speakers. Mastering the second language does not equip the learner to handle naturally occurring conversations in which context is more dominant than single utterances.

1.1.3 *Approaches to discourse analysis*

Studies on language behavior go back to the twentieths of the last century (Bhatia et al., 2008). Discourse analysis is multidisciplinary and approaches to study it are deeply-rooted in many fields such as sociology, anthropology and philosophy among others. One example are the works of the philosopher Wittgenstein (1922), who brings into attention the importance of the notion of symbolism in using language with the intention to communicate a definite meaning out of it. He also emphasizes the structural-semantic components of utterances by stating that a “logically perfect language has rules of syntax which prevent nonsense, and has single symbols which always have a definite and unique meaning” (Wittgenstein, 1922: 7). This is emphasized in a later publication by Austin (1962) who indicates that studying language should go beyond the structure of utterances to cover the social context in which the utterance is used.

As explained above, discourse analysis has been the focus of attention for decays. Therefore, many approaches to it are developed in order to achieve a thorough understanding of the nature of language use. The following is a discussion of the approaches to discourse analysis.

1.1.3.1 *Speech act theory*

Founded by Austin (1955) in a lecture that was later published in 1962, this theory is mainly concerned with the function of utterances used to perform actions. The analysis of speech acts provides insightful knowledge of their nature and how they function in the context in which they are used. As Searle (1969) puts it, language is performative as well as descriptive. In other words, language is not mere utterances; rather, it serves specific contextual purposes.

In this regard, speech act theory can be applied on utterances in order to analyze the interlocutors’ intentions (illocutionary force) implied in the utterances produced in order to achieve a specific purpose. For example, a sign that reads, ‘Thank you for having your payment ready’ at the drive thru of a fast food chain is used to express the restaurant’s request that the customers should have their payment ready at the window even though the wording of the sign does not exactly indicate a request. According to Stubbs (1983), the basic unit of discourse analysis, on the basis of speech act theory, is not formally motivated; rather, it is functionally motivated.

1.1.3.2 *Interactional sociolinguistics*

This approach is the focus of the current paper. It is based on the analysis of language used in face-to-face social interactions in different contexts such as public speech, daily conversations, interviews and classroom discourse. Interactional sociolinguistics approach to discourse analysis branches from anthropology (Stubbs, 1983) as a result of a body of research conducted to develop a theory that considers language as an integral factor to social, cultural and intercultural process (Gumperz, 1982; Goffman, 1981). In this regard, this approach analyzes social interactions by the use of interactional strategies which are culturally identified (Tannen, 1984).

Furthermore, interactional sociolinguistics approach is used as a strategy to analyze the interactions that take place among participants who belong to different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and therefore need to use different sociolinguistic resources (Rampton, 2017). As a result, a participant in a given interaction with somebody from a different socio-cultural environment may hear parts of the conversation within a linguistic and/or cultural means which is different from the one within which that utterance is originally produced (the current study). Gumperz (1982) attributes these different socio-linguistic means of communication to linguistic

and cultural- specific interpretations of discourse contextualization cues such as turn taking, intonation, gender, stereotypes, etc.

1.1.3.3 *Ethnography of communication*

Founded by Hymes (1972), this approach is developed in order to understand language in ethnographic fieldwork rather than viewing it as an abstract model. Hymes (1972) essentially argues that native speakers acquire communicative competence of their native tongues; as a result, they communicate with other members of their community in a manner that does not always adhere to correct grammatical sentences. It is taken that native speakers possess “knowledge of the linguistic code as well as of the socio-cultural rules, norms and values which guide the conduct and interpretation of speech and other channels of communication in a community” (Johnstone & Marcellino, 2010: 4).

The underlying principle of this theory is based on the analysis of speech events; “activities that are directly governed by rules or norms for the use of speech” (Hymes 1972: 56). In other words, speech events are conversations that take place within a speech situation in order to achieve a certain outcome. These conversations mostly depend on factors such as the relationships that hold between the participants and their social status, setting, topic, in addition to the immediate socio-cultural context in which the utterances occur. Speech events are different from speech acts in that the latter can be part of the former. Example 1, which is dialogue between a father and his daughter while tucking her in bed, is a good example that illustrates the difference between a speech event and a speech act:

EXAMPLE 1

FATHER: Do you want me to leave the hallway light on in case you want to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night?

DAUGHTER: I’m thirteen, dad!

FATHER: Oh, ok good night!

The whole dialogue is a speech event between two family members of different status, and the setting is bedtime at her bedroom. The daughter’s response to her father is a speech act; i.e. an indirect “refusal” to her father’s request which is formed as a question. The father’s reaction to his daughter’s response, on the other hand, reflects his understanding of his daughter’s message, even though he does not directly state that in his utterance. Speech events are characterized by providing as much information as possible about the context, social relationships, register, etc.

1.1.3.4 *Pragmatics*

Pragmatics plays a very important role in the process of discourse analysis and interpretation of different verities of utterances. It provides the framework to characterize conversations in terms of human activities related to the linguistic structure of utterances (Stubbs, 1983). In Example 1, we know by applying a discourse analysis that the daughter’s utterance is a response to her father’s question. It is only by principles of pragmatics (e.g. speech acts) that we interpret her response as an indirect refusal to her father’s offer. In other words, the daughter’s intention is deciphered on the basis of the pragmatic approach principles. On the other hand, the father’s response to his daughter’s utterance is interpreted as an agreement to what she said. The analysis of the father and the daughter’s responses reinforces Grice’s (1975) term *conversational cooperation* that requires mutual comprehension of speakers’ intentions that underlie the linguistic level of utterances.

1.1.3.5 *Conversation analysis*

Conversation analysis can be defined as the study of the characteristics of social actions that take place in different interactions (Antaki, 2008). The focus of this approach is to analyze data in naturally occurring conversations in everyday life, and to provide an interpretation of their non-literal meaning on the basis of the speaker's intention at the specific conversation being analyzed (Garfinkel, 1967). According to Packer (1999) conversation analysis focuses on studying daily interchanges in terms of their interactive and practical construction.

Conversation analysis includes studying all characteristics of a given conversation, such as turn-taking, discourse markers, sequence of utterances, backchannels etc. In view of that, Stubbs (1983) regards conversation as a set of pragmatic units of turn-taking activity. He provides a discussion of two major principles of conversation analysis; (a) only one individual speaks at a time, and (b) turn-taking takes place. As a result, Stubbs (1983) proposes the term *Turn Constructional Unit* (TCU) in order to analyze points of potential turn-taking in ordinary conversations. Although TCU offers a prolific interpretation of daily conversations, it is not functional in analyzing unsystematic incomplete interactions.

Moreover, natural conversations, among other actions we perform, are said to be determined in advance (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974). This is confirmed by Heritage (1998) who argues that daily conversations are “organized from the outset in an explicit and predictable way” (p. 5). It can be said that natural conversations depend on mutual pre-established competences that speakers use in their social interactions.

1.1.3.6 *Variation analysis*

This approach to discourse analysis adds a social context to the analysis of linguistic utterances. Based on his foundational studies on sociolinguistic variables, Labov (1972a) indicates that the use of a particular variant of one given variable is determined by linguistic and social factors that work in combination to construct social meaning of utterances. For example, the use of French pronouns “tu” and “vous” depends on factors such as the relationship between the speakers, the social context, the setting, the topic, etc.

The purpose of having such variations in discourse is to distinguish between linguistic and social characteristics and to associate meaning to them. As Eckert (2008), states, “we construct a social landscape through the segmentation of the social terrain, and we construct a linguistic landscape through a segmentation of the linguistic practices in that terrain” (p. 3). It follows that variation analysis to social utterances adds a productive set of data about social relations through which change takes place as well as the way speakers use linguistic variables to position themselves as members in their social domain.

2. The current study

This paper focuses on the interactions between a mother and her daughter who belong to different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The interactional sociolinguistics approach is applied in order to analyze the discourse features of these conversations. The purpose of this study is to indicate that linguistic competence in isolation is not enough for second language learning; it needs communicative competence required for language use in social interactions. Lack of sufficient knowledge of context needs and culture norms can result in undesired deficiency in proper communication.

3. Participants of the study

This study provides a discourse analysis of Arabic-English interactions between a mother and her 14-year-old daughter who belong to different socio-cultural backgrounds. The mother, currently a professor in the university in the United States, was raised in North Africa in the Middle East and came to the United States on a PhD Scholarship. Therefore, she is culturally Middle Easterner. The daughter, on the other hand, came to the United States when she was three years old and has lived in there ever since. The daughter is exposed to American culture at a very young age and has very limited exposure to Middle Eastern culture through some conversations with her mother and some other Middle Easterners at the mosque during Islamic holiday season.

Despite the mother's attempts to speak Arabic more frequently at home, she mostly speaks it at times when she is serious and/or not in a very good mood, and when she purposefully entails her English utterances with their Arabic translations. The daughter is also exposed to Arabic through occasional conversations with Middle Easterner individuals she meets at the mosque in Islamic holidays. Therefore, she is exposed to two varieties of Arabic: The North African Arabic dialectic her mother speaks and other dialects the daughter hears from the individuals she meets at the mosque.

4. Data collection and methodology

Data analysis includes studying utterances produced by the mother and daughter and other native speakers of Arabic, and analyzing them in terms of culture differences between the two participants. The analysis is approached by using the interactional sociolinguistic theory which focuses on discourse analysis on the basis of socio-cultural backgrounds of the participants. This approach explores the forces imposed by social and cultural factors and the way they are represented in speech (Antaki, 2008).

5. Data analysis and discussion

The analysis is based on two interpretation strategies used by the daughter: literal audio translation and overgeneralization. Below is a detailed discussion of the two of them.

5.1 *Literal audio translation*

In her conversations with her daughter, the mother uses Arabic words and expressions at occasional times either to emphasize the seriousness of the situation or to seize the opportunity to teach her daughter new Arabic words. During these conversations, the mother produces utterances that are not received by the daughter the way they are intended to be received. The reason for this communication failure is attributed to factors such as the word-to-word audio translation strategy the daughter applies to words and phrases in order to make up for the insufficient knowledge of social norms associated to utterances. Example 2 illustrates this strategy:

EXAMPLE 2

DAUGHTER: Why do you put my jeans in that bag?

MOTHER: Ashan mnatf-at!

Because short-PLURAL

“Because they are short”.

DAUGHTER: Well, I'm not fat either!

In Example 2, the mother gives the reason why she puts her daughter's jeans in a bag; the daughter has grown out of the jeans and the mother wants to donate them. The mother uses the utterance *mnatfat*, which is Arabic North African dialect for "they are short". However, the daughter hears the utterance as if the mother has said *I'm not fat*; and therefore, responds by saying *I'm not fat either*. The daughter uses exact audio translation of the way she hears the utterance to respond to it. As stated above, the daughter is a native speaker of English, and she uses word-to-word audio translation when speaking Arabic or responding in it. The daughter's response in Example 3 is similar to Example 2.

EXAMPLE 3

MOTHER: Jeeb-i al-muse
 Bring-YOU THE-knife
 "Bring the knife"

DAUGHTER: What? We have a moose!

In Example 3, the daughter also uses her exact audio translation of what she hears to make a response. The word *muse* in North African Arabic dialect means *knife*; however, it is interpreted by the daughter to mean the wild animal *moose* as it sounds like that. The daughter does not possess sufficient communicative competence of Middle Eastern culture and therefore resorts to literal audio translation to handle conversations with her mother.

The next three examples provide more discussion on the audio translation strategy used by the daughter. These examples are taken from interactions between the daughter and individuals at the mosque. Arabic is the dominant language in this context. In Example 4, the daughter misinterprets the speaker's message because of applying literal audio translation to the utterance.

EXAMPLE 4

SPEAKER: Anti warda baytha'a
 You flower white
 "You are a white flower"

[Daughter turns to mom]

DAUGHTER: Why does he call me a flower that is an egg?

Example 4 demonstrates the word-to-word audio translation strategy the daughter adopts in her utterances. The Arabic word *baytha'a* the speaker uses as a compliment to a feminine person/thing means *white* in English. It sounds very similar to the Arabic word *baytha* which means *an egg* in English, only that the word *byatha'a* ends with a longer vowel. Therefore, the daughter uses her background knowledge of the pronunciation of the Arabic word *egg* to translate the word the speaker says based on how she hears it.

A similar action from the daughter's part is presented in Example 5 when she understands the speaker's utterance based on how she hears it not on what it means.

EXAMPLE 5

SPEAKER: Merhaba, shlone-k?
 Hi, how-you?
 "Hello, how are you?"

[Daughter turns to mom]

DAUGHTER: Why does he ask me about my color?

The utterance *shlonek* in Example 5 is used in the Arabic dialects of the gulf countries in the Middle East to mean *how is it going?* Although the word *shlonek* DOES sound like *what is your color* to the ear of an Arabic speaker who is not from the gulf countries, it is well-known all over that expanded region that this word is a question that is used at the beginning of the conversation to ask about how somebody is doing. The daughter, being raised in the United States, is not familiar with this cultural norm because she does not hear anybody use the word *shlonek* including her own mother who speaks a different Arabic dialect from the ones spoken in the gulf countries.

In Example 6, the daughter uses her previous knowledge of the Arabic word *Sharab* to interpret her mother's utterance.

EXAMPLE 6

MOTHER: T-ebbi sharba?

You-want soup?

“Do you want soup?”

DAUGHTER: What flavor?

As seen in Example 6, the daughter misinterprets her mother's intention by translating the word *sharba* incorrectly. The word *sharba* is North African for *soup* in English. Also, it is derived from the standard Arabic *sharab* which means *drink* or *juice* in English, and this is the meaning the daughter is familiar with. Therefore, she asks about the flavors available so she can choose one, based on her assumption that her mother is serving juice not soup.

One last instance of literal audio translations used by the daughter as a strategy to handle communications in Arabic with her mother is found in Example 7.

EXAMPLE 7

[A lady at the mosque gives the mother a business card. The daughter reads the lady's first name REHAB, and turns to her mother].

DAUGHTER: She is named after an addiction healing program!

The daughter has limited knowledge of Middle Eastern culture and this, by nature, includes familiarity with Arabic names. The Arabic word *Rehab*, a plural of *Rahba*, means a vast area of land or some place (Almaany, 2010, 2017). This word is used as a feminine name in the Middle East. The daughter is familiar with the English word *rehab* which is short for *rehabilitation*, which refers to a healing treatment from drug and/or alcohol addiction. As a result, the daughter uses the exact form and meaning of the English word *rehab* to interpret the lady's name.

In the following part of the discussion, examples are provided regarding the daughter's overgeneralization strategy which she uses as an attempt to manage communicating in Arabic. She has an understanding of some Arabic words but she is not completely familiar with all the contexts in which these words can be possibly used. Therefore, she encounters interpretation challenges when the word she knows is used to fulfill a function she does not know.

5.2 Overgeneralization

As discussed earlier, the daughter has limited knowledge of Arabic vocabulary and therefore faces some difficulties understanding the messages implied in Arabic utterances. In Example 8, the daughter is not familiar with the other function the word *khalto* (Arabic for auntie) serves in dialectic Arabic.

EXAMPLE 8

SPEAKER: Merheba kahlto, kef hale-k?

Hi auntie, how state-you?

‘Hi auntie, how are you?’

[Daughter turns to mom]

DAUGHTER: Why does she call me kahlto? I *am* supposed to call her that!

In Example 8, the daughter is obviously not familiar with Yassin’s (1977) term *bipolarity*. According to bipolarity, some address terms in Arabic dialects used by family members can work both ways; i.e. they are used by the speaker and the addressee interchangeably. For example, the word *auntie* is used by the niece and nephew to address their aunt, or a stranger older lady. Likewise, the same word can be used by the aunt to address her nephews and nieces as well as stranger younger boys and girls as a way to express love and care for them (Abugharsa, 2014).

Based on this discussion, the lady in the mosque uses the term *kahlto* to make the daughter feel comfortable talking to her. However, since the daughter does not possess the knowledge of the other function the word *auntie* has; she misinterprets the lady’s message and turns to her mother for clarification.

Example 9 is a similar instance of partial understanding of the opposite meanings some Arabic words or expressions can have when used in different contexts. In North African Arabic dialect, the Arabic word *farkha* basically means *brat* when used to talk about a child who shows a negative behavior. However, it can also be used to express an opposite meaning when admiring a child or describing the cuteness of a chubby baby.

EXAMPLE 9

MOTHER: Entie shatera ya farkha!

You good oh brat

“You are a good cute girl!”

DAUGHTER: Laish t-goli farkha? Ana za’alana.

Why you-say brat? I sad

“Why do you say brat? I am sad”

In Example 9, due to the fact that the other meaning of the word *brat* is absent for the daughter, she understands it in accordance to the only meaning she knows, which is a naughty kid. Consequently, she expresses a negative reaction to her mother’s utterance which is intended to carry a different meaning.

In a similar regard, the daughter in Example 10 uses Arabic conjunction *ethan*, which means *so* in English as discourse markers to end her sentences.

EXAMPLE 10

DAUGHTER: Sahebt-i tebbi n-emshi l-ha fi al-weekend.

Friend-my want I-go to-her in the-weekend

“My friend wants me to hang with her in the weekend.”

MOTHER: Wa enti shin golti-l-ha?

And you what said-to-her?

“And what did you say to her?”

DAUGHTER: Ana golt na'sal mom, ethan?

I said ask mom, so?

"I told her I will ask my mom, so?"

[Silence]

DAUGHTER: Ethan?

"So?"

MOTHER: Ethan!

"So!"

DAUGHTER: So will you let me hang out with my friend?

As can be understood from Example 10, the daughter uses the Arabic conjunction in a place in which an English discourse marker is used. In other words, the daughter assumes that because the Arabic conjunction *ethan* means *so* in English, then she can use it to serve the functions that the English conjunction *so* fulfills. However, the Arabic conjunction is not used as a discourse marker at the end of the sentence as the case in English. It is used as a conjunction that connects clauses similarly to *so* when used as a conjunction in English. Therefore, there is a moment of silence after the daughter uses the Arabic conjunction because the mother assumes that the daughter still has more to say.

However, when the mother does not respond, the daughter repeats her utterance *ethan?* The mother repeats the daughter's utterance in the same question manner as an indication that she does not follow what her daughter intends to say. As a result, the daughter decides to state her question clearly in English in order to make sure that her mother understands it.

The daughter switches to English as she realizes that there is a communication gap between her and her mother. The gap occurs because the daughter uses an Arabic conjunction in an incorrect position in the utterance. The mother does not respond immediately because she expects her daughter to say more based on her (the mother) native understanding of the function that the Arabic conjunction fulfills; i.e. connecting two clauses. Instead, this conjunction is used by the daughter as a way to indicate a question: "*So will you let me hang out with my friend?*" which she finally provides in a full sentence because she knows her message is not delivered the way it is initially intended to be delivered.

Another interesting example is provided in 11 in which the daughter uses the overgeneralization strategy to respond to the Arabic word *halal* based on her understanding of one meaning of the word. The process comes out with inappropriate results because the chosen meaning of the word does not correspond with the context.

EXAMPLE 11

MOTHER: I have finally found halal nail polish.

DAUGHTER: You mean you can eat it?!

The Arabic word *halal* refers to everything Muslims are allowed to do in relation to their religious beliefs. In other words, it is not restricted to food; it includes everything permissible for Muslims to do. However, there is a general misunderstanding of the word *halal* among some non-Muslims who think it is only restricted to the food, specifically meat, that Muslims are allowed to eat. As a result, the daughter, being culturally American, uses this wrongful idea about the meaning of the Arabic word *halal* to interpret her mother's message.

The examples above illustrate the daughter's approach by which she interprets messages in Arabic utterances and responds to them. The sociolinguistic analysis provided in

these examples indicates resorting to literal audio translations and overgeneralizations from the part of the daughter due to her frequent failures to interpret contextualization cues in discourse.

6. Further discussion: Applying interactional sociolinguistics approach to ESL teaching

This paper provides examples that stress the importance of combining discourse learning to grammar learning when teaching a second language. Although this topic has been addressed by many former works of research that date back to the early eighties (Gillette, 1982), these studies focus mainly on applying discourse-based ESL learning by deriving information from the learner's needs in the academic setting. In other words, the teaching approach is based more on linguistic norms separately from discourse and/or culture.

In the mother-daughter case of the current study, we can see how the daughter is adopting the natural learning strategies that young native speakers use in their attempts to acquire their language. Resorting to overgeneralization is a key feature in first language acquisition as children use general cognitive mechanisms and distributional patterns in their language to form language-specific abstract categories by making generalizations from the cultural input (Ghalebi & Sadighi, 2015).

Therefore, certain teaching strategies such as constant corrections of learners' mistakes can result in a learning deficiency due to the negative impact these strategies may have on students' motivation to learn. Since we do not directly correct children when they make mistakes in acquiring their first language, we should do the same with ESL learners. A strategy such as accommodation (i.e. using simpler words and shorter sentences in addition to body language) can bring significant results in students' learning process and enable them to correct their own mistakes and pay more attention to discourse.

Another strategy that ESL instructors can encourage using in the classroom is called intention reading via which the students infer the speaker's message by focusing on the context and the discourse. This strategy is also used by children to determine intentions behind the linguistic conventions produced by adult speakers to achieve social ends; i.e. learn from culture. This is summed up in Tomasello's (2003) usage-based theory in which he states that language structure (grammar) emerges from language use. In this regard, the focus in ESL classrooms should be shifted more towards language use rather than teaching language forms in isolation from discourse.

It is important that the classroom environment is enriched with the appropriate requirements for a comprehensive teaching plan that ensures the efficiency of the whole process. When a new word/phrase is presented to the students, it is recommended that other common meanings of this word are discussed even if they are irrelevant to the current context. Students need to avoid limiting the meaning of a given word to the current situation in order to realize that this word/phrase may not function similarly if the context changes. For example, the idiomatic expression "*butterflies in my stomach*" is used to indicate a negative meaning that expresses nervousness and anxiety usually before performing a non-comfortable task such as speaking in public. However, the phrase "*social butterfly*" has a completely different meaning which is used to refer to an individual who is social and friendly.

Likewise, when teaching the preposition of place "*up*" to explain the placement of something from a lower point to a higher position, the ESL instructor should also explain the meaning of the question "*what's up?*" so that the students do not look at the ceiling! Teaching aids such as the use of technology (e.g. videos, songs, phone applications, etc.), in addition to having guest native speakers can be highly efficient in providing the learners with the chance to get exposed to real-life situations that develop better learning skills.

One final point to discuss is regarding the influence the first language has in learning a new one. This influence is seen by many researchers and scholars as a disadvantage in that it can hinder second language learning. It should be stated that the first language can also be a facilitator in learning another language. The comparison that the learners make between the grammar structures of the two languages helps them become aware of both the deep structure and the surface structure of these languages. Being conscious about language grammar is one key factor in becoming a good speaker of a native language and a better learner of other languages.

7. Conclusion

Discourse analysis provides plentiful data on how social and cultural perspectives can shape our language. Understanding the messages intended to be delivered in interactions requires regarding the utterance as a linked pattern that exists above and below the sentence level. Failing to do so can result in communication breakdown. Therefore, learning a second language should not be limited to the linguistic structure of the target language; rather, it should also cover the socio-cultural context of the utterances.

This paper has provided examples of how learning a second language in isolation is not sufficient to have successful conversations in real life situations. The daughter has shown difficulty in her attempts to speak her second language because she is not exposed to the culture of that language. It is believed that the more Arabic conversations the daughter is involved in, the more and richer data can be collected.

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