PROBLEMS OF ARABIC WRITING FOR ENGLISH-SPEAKING LEARNERS OF ARABIC

Shatha Jamal Mohammad Al-ZOUBI[1]

Abstract

This study aims at recognizing problems that may occur when teaching English Language Speakers Arabic (alphabets) letters' calligraphy using contrastive analysis as a method of description and explanation. The study's contrastive method is based on three steps :

Description : it refers to English and Arabic writing systems and concentrating on differences and similarities between the two languages.

Expected problems :spotting the differences between Arabic and English writing systems and that's for these differences are the cause for difficulties when any two languages meet concerning translation or learning.

Suggested solutions: Having specific procedures through which we can simplify letters calligraphy learning process according to Language familiarity approach moving from the easiest to the most difficult .The study has many discussions regarding linguistic contrastive analysis of a language.

Key Words: speaking learners, contrastive analysis, language.

[1] Instructor "A" -Al-Balqa Applied University, Jordan, shathazoubi@yahoo.com

مشكلات تعليم الحروف العربية للناطقين بالإنجليزية: دراسة لسانية تقابلية

أ. شذى جمال مُحَمَّد الزعبي–جامعة البلقاء –الأردن

ملخص

تسعى هذه الدراسة للتعرف على المشكلات المفترض وقوعها عند تعلم الناطقين بالإنجليزية رسم الحروف العربية، وذلك باعتماد منهجية التحليل التقابلي كأداة للوصف والتفسير.

وتقوم المنهجية التقابلية للدراسة على خطوات ثلاث:

–**الوصف**: ويقصد به وصف النظامين الكتابيين للعربية والإنجليزية، وبيان أوجه الاختلاف والاتفاق.

–**توقع المشكلات**: وذلك من خلال الوقوف على الاختلافات بين النظامين العربي والإنجليزي للكتابة باعتبار أن مناطق الاختلاف تمثل مواطن الصعوبة عندما تلتقي لغتان في التعليم أو الترجمة.

–**اقتراح الحلول**: وذلك بوضع آليات محددة نبسط من خلالها عملية التعليم لرسم الحروف وفق مبدأ المألوفية اللغوية، والانتقال من الأسهل إلى الأصعب. هذا وتنطوي الدراسة على نقاشات كثيرة في إطار من التحليل اللساني التقابلي للغة.

- Introduction:

This study aims to reveal the most prominent problems facing learners of Arabic writing, whose mother tongue is English, by comparing the Arabic and English written systems, through the approach of contrastive analysis, which is known for its ability to predict the problems resulting from the convergence of any two languages in the fields of education and translation.

- Contrastive analysis:

 The contrastive analysis is a branch of applied linguistics[1] , a methodology based on a comparison of languages[2] , but differs from that of comparative linguistics[3.] The analysis in the contrastive linguistics targets the comparison between two or more languages , irrespective of whether the two languages or languages belong to one linguistic family [4] , the comparative approach compares only languages of one origin or one linguistic family [5] . Conversely , the contrastive   analysis highlights the differences among languages which are considered the origin of the educational and translation problems [6], while the comparative approach seeks to identify similarities and does not care about differences [7.] The similarities are the subject of the comparison because it seeks for the rooting of language, and clarifying the common impact and influence among languages. All this to demonstrate   the scientific truth. Consequently, the purpose of the comparative linguistics is purely scientific[8] , and the purpose of the contrastive analysis is a pragmatic process aimed at overcoming problems and difficulties if two languages in the field of education or translation meet .[9] The contrastive   linguistic work is based on three successive

steps: description, analysis and proposing solutions[10].As for the description, we study the two comparative linguistic systems and describe their linguistic elements whether phonetic, morphological, grammatical or semantic[11]. As for the analysis, we do a comparison between the two systems targeted by the description to highlight the elements of differences and similarities between them and to identify the differences which are described as the origin of difficulty [12] . The third step in the contrastive study seeks to propose scientific and practical solutions, in which the course maker or teacher can avoid the problem areas and work to overcome and cope with them [13].

Accordingly, this study seeks to examine the Arabic and English written systems according to this methodology in the following pages:.

* The contrastive Analysis of Arabic and English Writing:

-Description :

A. The Arabic writing: Arabic and Semitic writings rely primarily on the representation of consonants and semi consonants [14] . The long and short diacritical marks are represented in a different way:

- Short diacritical marks : they are not represented in parallel with the representation of consonants , but placed above or below the letter, hence writing the short diacritics (vowelization) is not called a letter. On the other hand, the representation of short diacritical marks is not disciplined in Arabic writing in the same way .Most Arab publications do not represent short diacritics, but their writings are devoid of any representation.

- Long diacritical marks: These sounds were not represented in the early stages of Arabic writing, because writing was only represented by consonants [15]. And at a later stage, these sounds were randomly represented in some writings and remained without representation in others, but the representation of these sounds came in contrast to short diacritical marks : they were represented in parallel with the writing of the consonants and not according to the principle above or below the letter.

These sounds also remained unrepresented in many other words, as in the following words ..... ذلك إولئك ,هذه ,هذا , الرحمن

- As for the Arabic consonants , their representation has been steadily and precisely accurate. Each letter represents one Arabic consonant , and each consonant is represented by one letter, which made some scholars consider the Arabic writing as accurate vocal writing [16], forgetting about the diacritical marks and their troubled representations. This judgment was based on the reality of Arabic writing as a writing based on consonants.

English Writing:

English, unlike Arabic, does not only represent consonants , but also vowels on the same level of writing[17]. The English alphabet contains both of consonants and diacritical marks together, unlike the Arabic alphabet, where short diacritics are never mentioned. Thus, in the English writings, there are problems and confusion with the representation of consonants and diacritical marks together.[18] The two consonants "Th" may represent the sound of / θ/ or the sound of / đ / , as well as the

suffix plural (s) may be represented by the sound /s/ or /z/ , or the sound / s / may be represented by the letter (s) or (c) .In addition , the sound /k/ may be represented by letters (c) or (k) or (ck) and so on . In summary, the problem of writing in English is related to consonants and diacritical marks, whereas in Arabic , it is concentrated on short diacritical marks basically , and long diacritics in general.

* Analysis:

The description of the Arabic and English writing systems shows the problems that may arise in teaching Arabic writing to those whose mother- tongue is English as follow:

A - The representation of short diacritical marks: the person who is accustomed to the English writing is not familiar with writing the short diacritics above and below the letter, because the writing of short diacritical marks in the English writings is the writing of independent letters not placing symbols belonging to the letters .Hence, this English learner will face the problem of representing the short diacritical marks above and below the character, not in parallel with the consonants, and his representation will come to place the diacritical marks in full and in all writings, while the Arabic writing does not require such representation, as the representation will be in specific areas including difficult word . In general , the increasing representation in publications in some texts is a matter of visual reading and quality assurance ,but it does not necessarily mean that the writers are bound to place the diacritics in the same texts. On the other hand, the absence of placing the short diacritical marks on some Arabic words in most texts faced by the learner outside the classroom, creates a major problem in reading and understanding,

because the absence of short diacritics from the Arabic writing creates what is known as writing ambiguity or multiple reading possibilities such as :k.t.b" " may be read as: kataba , kutiba , katab, kutub, and so on.

 The context alone decides how to read the word, and therefore the writing problem of short diacritical marks necessarily leads to a major problem in reading, and thus to a semantic problem, which requires description and analysis to try to find solutions.

- Long diacritical marks: The English learner will have a problem in placing long diacritical marks less than short diacritics, as the disturbance in placing long diacritical marks in Arabic writing appears only in a few known words. Thus , because the learner has learned to place long diacritical marks in his language and in Arabic in parallel with the consonants, he will write words such as ذالك إولائك ,هاذه ,هاذا إلرحمان ,.... , and ذلك إولئك ,هذه ,هذا إلرحمان in a way of الرحمن ,هذا, هذه such as this writing contradicts that historical image of writing these words, and therefore what the English learner represented, above, is considered a breach of the rules of writing, although in practice, the more accurate representation of the uttered   form.

On the other hand, the English learner will face a very limited reading problem, which is the difficulty of reading these Arabic writings such as هذه ,هذا , الرحمن, ذلك إولئك…..at the beginning .

However, the writing problem and the results of reading problems due to placing the short diacritical marks remain confined to these historical images and also need practical solutions.

- Writing Consonants : as shown in the description, consonants do not represent any problem in writing or pronunciation .The letter -sound relationship in writing consonants is one-to-one, that is, each letter represents one sound , and each sound represents only one letter.

However, the problems in writing arise because of the nature of the Arabic writing based on the idea of connecting letters in writing [20] , not in an independent and disconnected manner as in English writing. The connection of the (letters) leads to a single letter with more than one shape : one at the beginning of the word and another in the middle and one at the end . It is a kind of a change in the shape , but a limited change mostly retains the general shape of the letter. The letter (ب) is written as (ب)at the beginning of the word and as (ـبـ) in the middle and as (ـب) at the end of the word , as well as the writing of (ت) , (ي) and (ن) as well as most Arabic letters .But the connection in writing leads to a total change in letters like (هـ) and (ت) : the shapes of (هـ) are (هـ) at the beginning of the word , (ـهـ) in the middle and (ـه) in the end of the word. While (ت) is written as (تـ) at the beginning of the word and (ـتـ) in the middle and two forms at the end of the word (ـت) and (ـة) This difference in writing will lead to difficulty in writing without reading, and the difficulty of writing means that the English learner will write the (ـة (as (ـت) and vice versa , and so on……. while the control of writing the Arabic (هـ) remains less than the (ت) with the expectation that the learner will face another difficulty which is the distinction between (ـة) and (هـ) in writing and reading.

- Suggested solutions:

After the study has completed describing and analyzing the Arabic and English written systems, it must accomplish the third and final task in the steps of contrastive analysis which is to propose scientific solutions to overcome the expected problems. The researcher suggests :

- Stabilizing short diacritical marks in all texts for the learners, to avoid the reading problem, on the one hand, and the learner becomes familiar with these   diacritical marks according to the principle above the letter and under it.

- Encouraging learners to write these short diacritical marks in all areas at the beginning , and then begin to reduce these diacritics little by little, and finally to place these marks only in ambiguous words.

- -Postponing the teaching of historical words that presuppose the drawing of long diacritical marks, to advanced stages of teaching . So words like : ذلك إولئك ,هذه ,هذا ,الرحمن…..are not taught but in advanced stages, and in the early stages ,   standard words which are the dominant ones   and disciplined rules of Arabic writing are taught.

- -Teaching the historical words such as : الرحمن , هذا ,هذه ,إولئك ذلك in advanced stages with reference to these words as representing only a limited number and have known historical circumstances.

- Postponing teaching the (ت) and(ـة)   to the advanced stage of education, while teaching the (ت) at the beginning and the middle of the word, as required by the educational process.

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