Using Task-Based Language Teaching to Contextualize Culture and Improve Spelling for Arabic-Speaking English Language Learners

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Statement of the problem

Arabic-Speaking English language learners (ASELLs) may struggle with correct spelling and upholding cultural standards of politeness/intercultural competence.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this proposed experimental study is to test how effective metapragmatic Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) instruction is in improving ASELLs' spelling and intercultural competence.

Research Hypotheses

$H_0$1: The spelling post-test results of ASELLs who received differentiated TBLT instruction is not significantly different than the post-test results of those who receive regular instruction.

$H_0$2: The intercultural competence post-test results of ASELLs who received differentiated TBLT instruction is not significantly different than the post-test results of those who receive regular instruction.

Background

Differences in Writing

English

- Latin alphabet
- Left to right
- Capitalization
- 26 graphs

Arabic

- Arabic abjad
- Right to left
- Lack of capitalization
- 28 graphs

This is a sentence.

هذه جملة.

Spelling Errors

- More total errors than other groups of ELLs
- More vowel errors than consonant errors

Table 1. Examples of General Error Categories†††

Error Types	Vowel Error Examples	Consonant Error Examples
1. Graph/Digraph Choice:	seviral (several), pai (pie)	cources (courses),plak (black)
2. Salient Omission:	inter_sted (interested)	hear_ (heart)
3. Silent Omission:	leag_e (league),	hai_t (height)
4. Insertion:	prefefers (prefers)	driviting (driving)
5. Metathesis:	thier (their)	[ingore]‡‡‡ (ignore)
6. Metathesis CV:	starnge (strange)	

(Deacon, 2017, p.10)

Spelling Errors, cont.

+ Grapheme to Phoneme Correspondence (GPC)

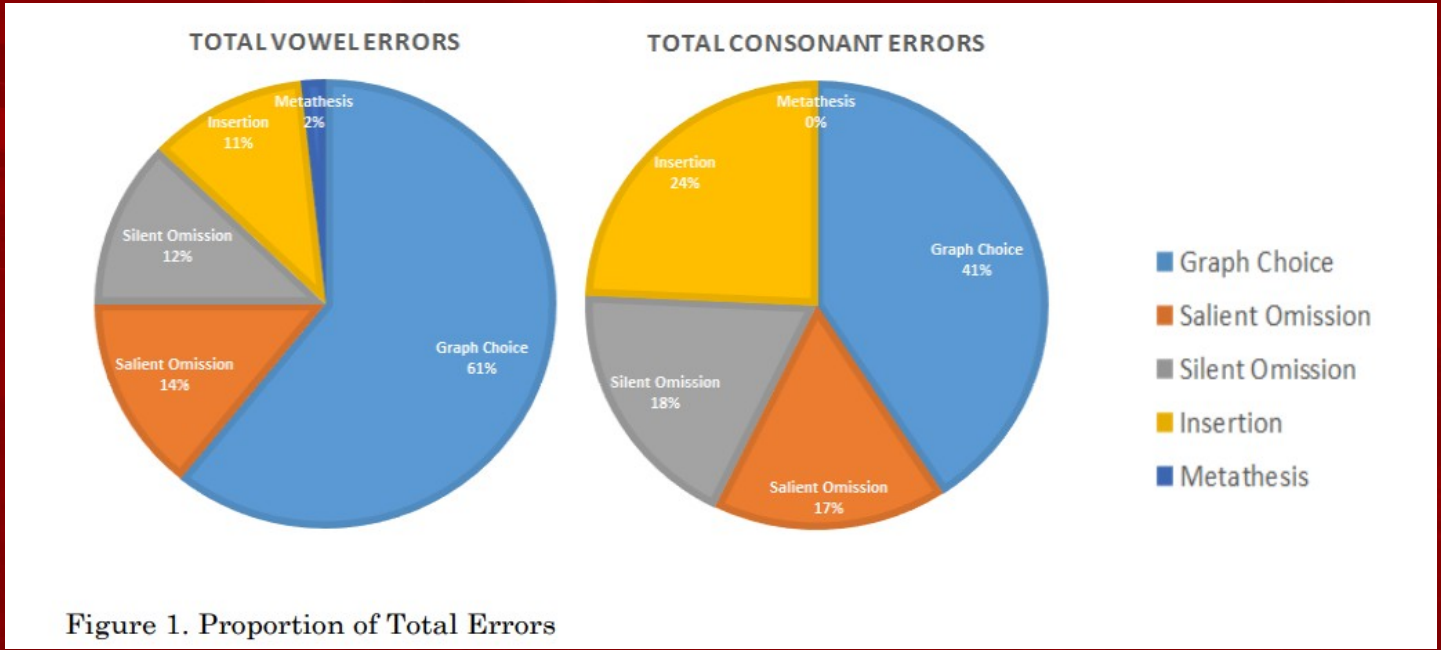


Figure 1. Proportion of Total Errors

(Deacon, 2017, p.14)

GPC in English

Grapheme	**Phonemes**
- 5 graphs that represent	~11 vowels, ~8 diphthongs
- 21 graphs that represent	~24 consonants

GPC in Arabic

Grapheme	**Phonemes**
- 28 graphs that represent	28 consonants
- 3 graphs that represent	3 long vowels
- (3 diacritics that represent	3 short vowels)

Pragmatic Failure

- “the inability to understand ‘what is meant by what is said’” Thomas (1983, p. 91)

- “whenever two speakers fail to understand each other’s intentions” Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1986, p. 166)

Expressing Requests

English

- Negative face
- Less direct
- Conditional statements
- Past modals:

  could, would, might

Arabic

- Positive face
- More direct
- Imperatives
- Present modals mostly:

  can, will, may

Expressing Requests, cont.

English

- “Can you wait for me so we can go together?”
- “Help yourself”
- “Can you please open the window?

Arabic

- “Don't go alone, wait for me”
- “We want you to have dinner with us”
- “Open the window”

Examples

“We want you to have dinner with us… Join us for God's sake… Come eat with us.”

"I swear by Allah I will not accept your invitation next time if you do not join me.

I ask you by Allah name not to refuse my invitation… Join us for God's sake... I swear by God, you eat.”

"I swear to divorce my wife if you do not eat"

Differentiated instruction for ASELLs

- Understand the student population
- Filter the instructions
- Increasing student's participation
- Consider value clarification as a teaching method
- Keep a teaching journal

(Raza, 2018)

Methodology

Task-Based Language Teaching

- Communicative Language Teaching

- Meaning is primary.
- Real-world activities
- Task completion is prioritized
- The assessment in terms of outcome

Teaching Politeness ?

- Politeness is culture-specific
- Choice to be either polite or impolite
- Explicit metapragmatic instruction facilitates the development of pragmatic abilities

Thank you!

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