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**Department of Languages**

**Errors in Applying Rules for English Possessive  
Case. The Case of 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Students, Constantine.**

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Master Degree in Applied Language Studies**

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## *Dedication*

*“Yesterday is a history, tomorrow is a mystery, today is a gift that is why we call it the present.”*

*To :*

*My beloved family; my father and my mother.*

*My brother and my sisters.*

*To:*

*My best friends.*

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Finally, I realize that the study is still far from perfect; I have great expectation that this final project would be useful for further study.

## **Abstract**

This project aims mainly at determining the main errors and finding out the causes or sources of the errors in using English possessive case markers by 3<sup>rd</sup> year university learners at the English Department, Mentouri University, Constantine. This study is conducted under the consideration that English possession is expressed in a different way from that of Arabic. It, also, has a number of rules and grammatical structures difficult to learners to master and apply in an effective way. A test method is used to gather data. After identifying the error patterns, various sources of the learners' errors are analyzed. The results of the study reveal the sources of the learners' errors to be complex and multi-faceted. Through the analysis of the sources of possessive case errors in learning English as a foreign language, the study confirms that interference from Arabic, the native language of the learners, is the main factor that affects their process of learning. It is noteworthy that errors in using English possessive markers are still made by 3<sup>rd</sup> year students. So, it is suggested that the learners of English as a foreign language should pay considerable attention to English grammar rules.

## Table of Contents

Dedication .....	i
Acknowledgement .....	ii
Abstrat.....	iii
Table of contents.....	iv
List of tables and Diagrams.....	viii
Transliteration of the Arabic Writing System.....	ix
List of Abbreviations.....	x
<b>General Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1. Statement of the problem.....	1
2. Aim of the study.....	1
3. Research Questions and Hypothesis.....	2
4. Means of Research.....	2
5. The Structure of the Study.....	3
<b>Chapter One: Learning English As a Second Language.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Part one: The Process of Learning a Second Language .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1. Second Language Acquisition.....	4
2. Contrastive Analysis.....	5
1.2. Definition.....	5
2.2. Transfer as the basis for CA.....	6

3.2. Interference Theory.....	7
4.2. The Strong Version of Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH)....	8
5.2. The Weak Version of CAH.....	10
3. Error Analysis (EA).....	10
1.3. Definition.....	10
2.3. The Definition of Error.....	10
3.3. The Classification of Errors.....	12
4.3. Strengths and Weaknesses of EA.....	13
4. Interlanguage Theory.....	14
<b>Part two:English Versus Arabic Possession.....</b>	<b>16</b>
1. English Possessive Case.....	16
1.1. The Genitive Case “ ‘s” .....	16
1.1.1. Basic rules.....	18
1.1.2. Special rules.....	19
1.1.3. Double possessive.....	19
1.1.4. The genitive “ ‘s” or the “of structure”.....	20
2. Arabic Possession.....	22
1.2Strategy1.....	22
2.2 Strategy2.....	23
3.2 Strategy3.....	24

4.2Strategy4.....	24
5.2 Strategy5.....	24
6.2Strategy6.....	25
7.2 Strategy7.....	25
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Chapter2: Test.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>27</b>
1. The test.....	27
1.1. The sample.....	27
2.1. Description of the test.....	27
3.1. Methods of the study.....	28
2. Data Analysis.....	29
3. part 2: Test of Knowledge.....	29
1.3. Discussion.....	31
4. Part2:The Analysis of Exercise2 Results.....	35
5. Part3: The Analysis of Exercise3 Results .....	37
6. Discussion.....	38
1.6. Confusion over usage.....	38
2.6. Wrong placement of the Apostrophe.....	39
3.6. Omission of the Apostrophe.....	40

4.6. Unnecessary Insertion of the Apostrophe.....	41
5.6. Other Grammatical Errors.....	42
7. Results of Error Analysis.....	43
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>General Conclusion.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>ملخص.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Résumé.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>49</b>



## List of Tables and Figures

Table1: Basic Rules.....	19
Table2: Special Rules.....	22
Table3: Genitive “ ‘s” or “of structure”.....	22
Table4: Number of Errors.....	30
Table5: Categorization of Errors.....	30
Table6: Number of Errors in Confusion Over Usage.....	32
Table7: The percentage of Error Categories.....	33
Figure1: Percentage of Error Categories.....	34

## Transliteration of the Arabic Writing System:

The following transliteration system has been used when representing Arabic script in this dissertation. The scheme is as in Saad (1982:4)

Arabic Letters      Transliteration      Arabic Letters      Transliteration

### Consonants

ء	ʔ	ض	d
ب	b	ط	tʰ
ت	t	ظ	zh
ث	th	ع	c
ج	j	غ	gh
ح	h	ف	f
خ	x	ق	q
د	d	ك	k
ذ	dh	ل	l
ر	r	م	m
ز	z	ن	n
س	s	ه	hʰ
ش	sh	و	w
ص	ç	ي	y

The definite article will be transliterated as /al: in spite of the fact that it has a hamza /ʔ/ in the Arabic system of writing.

## **List of Abbreviations**

CA: contrastive Analysis

EA: Error Analysis

L1: first language

L2: Second language

SLA: Second language acquisition

CAH: Contrastive analysis hypothesis

## **General Introduction**

### **1. Statement of the problem**

One of the central goals in research on second language acquisition is to discover what knowledge and abilities learners bring to the learning situation. In learning a foreign language, learners are said to be engaged in comparing the linguistic features of their mother tongue with those of the target language.

This research will examine an error pattern committed by university students: the genitive marker “of/’s” indicating possession. It is conducted in the sense that the great majority of them find difficulty in applying its rules of usage and fail to make the distinction between the two markers. In fact, this is a highly complex matter not only for second language learners but for native learners as well. Hence, learners seem to be affected by interference from their first language in which there is a limited sense of possession. Then, they tend either to generalize rules or to avoid the “ ‘s” marker and use the “of structure” thinking that they are always interchangeable. Considering, however, naturally occurring data in a corpus, it is possible to find a habitually preferred pattern by English native speakers.

### **2. Aim of the Study**

The present study examines the errors made by university learners in the application of English possession. The specific aim of the research is to investigate the extent to which students succeed in applying the rules of possessive case. It, also, tries to make students aware of the difference between English possessive case rules and those of their first language. Moreover, the major aim of the research is to highlight the rules of English possessive case,

and those of Arabic which do not work in English, to help learners produce coherent English writings.

### **3. Research Questions and Hypothesis:**

This research tries to find answers to the following questions:

-What is the reason behind making errors in applying rules of English possessive case?

-What kinds of errors do learners make in the process of expressing English possession?

-Does learners' knowledge of the first language interfere in the process of learning the rules of English as a foreign language, specifically those of possessive case?

Trying to answer these questions and other related ones, the following hypothesis is stated:

If students try to use the Arabic way of expressing possession in the process of learning English possessive case rules, they would succeed in mastering the right way of expressing possession in English.

### **4. Means of Research**

To undergo the research a test has been administered to twenty students at the English department who have spent at least eight years learning the English grammar for the sake of

examining the complexity of language in use. Further, the research is oriented towards analyzing and making judgments about the status of the L1-L2 interference.

The administered test composed of three exercises in which students are asked to complete. Throughout the test each student is asked to work on his/her own.

## **5. The structure of the study**

The present research is divided into two main chapters. The first one is theoretical in nature and deals with a description of the related review of literature. It is divided into two parts. Part one, on the one hand, focuses on the process of learning when learners are said to face problems in learning English as a second language as far as this research is concerned. On the other hand, it centers around contrastive analysis and error analysis as two approaches related to this process. Meanwhile, part two deals with English and Arabic possession with different rules of usage.

Chapter two is practical and contains the analysis of the test given to third year students at the Department of English who are asked to do three exercises. Their errors are eventually analyzed and discussed.

# **Chapter 1: Learning English as a Second Language**

## **Part one: The Process of Learning a Second Language**

### **Introduction**

Learning English as a foreign language is very important Arab learners since it is the international language. In the process of learning, learners are said to make errors. This research tries to deal with a kind of the errors that may found. Hence, it attempts to explain the process of learning dealing with Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis as the main approaches that dealt with second language learning. Moreover, it focuses on the errors made by second language learners in the application of English possessive case. To do so, it first speaks about English and Arabic possession with different rules of usage. Then, a test is experimented to see the extent to which learners succeed in applying English possessive case rules and to find different kinds of errors they make.

### **1. Second Language Acquisition (SLA)**

The term ‘second language acquisition’ refers to a child’s or an adult’s acquisition of a new language who already has full knowledge of his first language. This process has been differentiated from childhood bilingualism, or simultaneous language acquisition, which is referred to as the simultaneous acquisition of two languages with exposure to both languages beginning in infancy or soon after (Ellis, 2003).

The concept ‘Second Language Acquisition’ has been defined by Grass and Silinker (2008, 1) as:

“...The study of how second languages are learned. It is the study of how learners create a new system with only limited exposure to a second language. It is the study of what is learned of a second language and what is not learned; it is the study of why most second language learners do not achieve proficiency in a second language as they do in their native language; it is also the study of why only some learners appear to achieve native like proficiency in more than one language.”

SLA research concerned itself with the description and the explanation of the acquisition of second language process. This has examined SLA from its first steps till the end of this process, in addition to different ways affected by external facts such as instruction, interaction and motivation. Its most interested areas have included the degree of transfer from L1, the degree of systematicity in learners' language, variation between learners or within one learner, and most particularly, it seeks to investigate the reason that made SLA process as opposed to acquiring a foreign language most of the time viewed as “incomplete”. Finally, SLA research findings have been drawn upon to find ways for the improvement of language learning and teaching. Research in this field of inquiry, in fact, has discovered a great deal about matters related to language learning / teaching and has advanced many interesting explanations (Cook, 2003).

## **2. Contrastive Analysis (CA)**

### **1.2. Definition**

As James (1980) puts it CA is a hybrid drawing on sciences of linguistics and psychology. He further defines it as “... a linguistic enterprise aimed at producing inverted two-valued typologies, and found in the assumption that languages can be compared”(13). . Moreover, Lado (1957) relates directly learning difficulty to difference between L1 and L2.



He indicates that the learner will find those similar instances to his native language easy to learn and those that are different difficult. (Carle,1980). The theory of transfer is the psychological basis of CA. Corder (1971) puts it “One explanation of L2 errors is that the learner is carrying over the habits of his mother tongue into the second language ..... Clearly this explanation is related to a view of language as some sort of habit-structure”.

Research in second language was all concerned about the finding of an answer concerning the effects of a first language on the process of learning a second one. Between the 1950 and 1990, there was a typical answer: "individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture” (Lado, 1957: 2). As a result, an assumption was developed saying that the system of one language could be contrasted with the system of a second language and allowed the prediction of the learners’ difficulties.

## **2.2. Transfer as the Basis for CA**

Ellis (1965) (cited in James, 2003:11) refers to transfer as “perhaps the single most important concept in the theory and practice of education”. This means that anything that learners learnt in earlier time, that is school settings, will be relevant in later life. He supplies a definition of transfer as follows: “the hypothesis that the learning of task A will affect the subsequent learning of task B”. From this definition, and by the substitution of “task A, task B” with “L1, L2” respectively, it is obviously clear that transfer is the psychological foundation of CA.

Jakobovits (cited in Richards,1974) defines transfer as “the use of previously available strategies in new situations...In second language learning, some of these strategies will prove helpful in organizing the facts about the second language, but others ,perhaps due to

superficial similarities, will be misleading and inapplicable”. Here, the learner tries to use his experience about structures in the target language and creates some deviant structures: e.g.:  
She’s name is Li Lan.

Osgood (1949) classifies transfer into two types: positive or facilitation, and negative or interference. The first occurs when the L1/L2 items are identical, and so the learner finds no difficulty in placing L1 items in L2 utterances. The second one, however, occurs when there is no similarity between the L1/L2 items. Here, the learner employs the same formal devices, but to serve different communicative purposes in L1 and L2.

### **3.2. Interference Theory**

Weinreich (1953:1) defines interference as “...those instances of deviation from the norms of either language which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language”. George’s mechanism of ‘ cross-association’, and Newmark and Reibel’s ignorance are two proposed alternative explanations to what CA considered L1 transfer to be.

This theory was first proposed by Newmark and Reibel (1968) to explain errors made by L2 learners. They explain the way by which interference comes about: in L2 contexts, adults can express themselves using any means found at their disposals in order to say something never known before. Silinker (1972:219) refers to ignorance as a pre-condition for a learner applying a strategy when he “realizes...that he has no linguistic competence with regard to some linguistic aspect of the target language”. This means that if L1/L2 formal devices are identical there will be a success in the full transfer of L1 item to L2 use.

Ignorance without –interference was first proposed by Duskova (1969:29) observing that a particular English construction “...will not present problems on the production level simply because hardly any learner will spontaneously use it”. Learners instead use what has been called “avoidance strategy”. That is to say, they avoid the use of certain structures just as a key not to make errors by providing paraphrases or some near equivalences.

Interference without-ignorance also frequently manifests itself. It occurs when learners are not ignorant of a given pattern; nevertheless, they keep on making errors over the same pattern. Indications of errors of this kind can be found, most of the time, as L1 transfer/without ignorance.

#### **4.2. The Strong version of contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH)**

The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis is the hypothesis proposed to account for difference in difficulty and ease in learning L2. Wordhaugh (1970) indicates that it can be put into two versions. The first one, called the strong version claims that:

- a) The main cause of L2 learners’ difficulty is interference from their mother tongue.
- b) The learning process becomes more difficult whenever there is an increase in the difference between the native language and the target language.
- c) Contrastivists can predict these difficulties relying on a systematic and scientific analysis.
- d) Contrastive analysis outcomes can be useful for teaching materials and course planning.

The second version, labelled the weak version, suggests that errors committed by L2 learners can be diagnosed by the linguists using available linguistic means. Oller (1972) states that CAH strong version is valid in the prediction of some L2 errors only. It is, also, an appropriate method in second language research concerning process of transfer and interference. However, Wordhaugh (1970:126) claims that “predictive CA is really a shame” because contrastivists never use CA as their basis of prediction, but relies on the teachers knowledge and their experience about errors. He adds that it is a “Pseudo-procedure” that can only be used theoretically and not in reality because of time constraints.

Starting from the 1970 onwards, CAH has brought a lot of criticism especially after the appearance of Chomsky’s classic view of Skinner’s Verbal Behaviour (Chomsky, 1959). Many studies, then, prove that there are some errors predicted by CA that do not pose any problem for L2 learners. Banathy and Madarasz (1969), for instance, insure that the assumption of what is similar is easy and what is different is difficult is totally wrong. Another major criticism is provided by Odlin (1989). He indicates that there is a total difference between the similarities and differences of the learners’ both languages (native and target) and the language means of production and comprehension. This means that if a learner comprehends easily a given structure in a second language, it is not necessary that he finds it easy in production. There is nothing that depends on his ability of comprehension to the ability of production. Moreover, Hughes (1980) argues that CAH “has undervalued the contribution of the learner, failed to recognize fully the nature of what has to be learned, and it did not take into account the way the L2 is presented to the learner”(58).

To sum up, what can be inferred from these criticisms and others is that CAH importance should not be underestimated and, at the same time, it should not be taken as a basis for teaching a second language. As Nickel (1971) indicates, relying on CAH in the

organization of teaching programs is no more than making a false picture about the task of language teachers'. In later studies, linguists prove that transfer is only a cause for only a small amount of errors.

## **5.2. The Weak Version of CAH**

There is a shift to the weak version from prediction to explanation. What is meant, here, is that in order to make predictions more reliable, they need to be checked after making the comparison of the two linguistic systems. This version has later been developed into "Error Analysis" which follows an inductive approach: it makes inferences by the analysis of actual errors. Error Analysis (EA), then, profits from real data to be more descriptive, and hence, more acceptable. It also has the advantage of less demands of contrastive theory.

## **3. Error Analysis (EA)**

### **1.3. Definition**

Another method of describing the linguistic system of the L2 learner has been developed. This is the method of Error Analysis. James (1994:701) defines it as: "a set of procedures for identifying, describing, and explaining errors in learner's language." In the field of applied linguistics, EA is the descriptive and comparative technic to CA. As Corder (1973) explains, EA is said to be comparative because of its attempt to compare learners' forms of language during the process of learning with the target language.

### **2.3. The Definition of Error**

Before the 1960's, during the dominance of the behaviouristic view upon language there existed a dominated view of language to consider learners' errors as something

undesirable. Making errors was seen as a sign of mislearning and regarded as undesirable to proper processes of language learning. According to the behaviouristic point of view, the reason behind making errors lies in inadequate teaching methods which if had been “perfect” they would never be committed. This way of thinking was considered to be naïve as there is nothing to be called “perfect” methodology especially with the appearance of the Universal Grammar concept proposed by Chomsky in 1957. The later (Ibid: 60) claimed that each human being has an innate capacity that can guide him through a vast number of sentence generation possibilities. Since then, a shift by language teachers towards the cognitive approach has started. Chomsky’s theory contributes in raising researcher’s interests about learners’ errors as a source of hypotheses formation.

The importance of errors in language learning was first advocated by Corder (1967). He proved that strategies of L2 learners could be inferred through the analysis of their errors and that could be helpful for researchers of L2 learning process. Selinker (1992) highlighted two fundamental contributions of Corder’s study in L2 learning. The first one is that the learner’s errors are systematic and the second is that they are not “negative” or “interfering” but a positive factor, indicative of testing hypothesis.

There are a lot of definitions developed for the concept of “error”. According to Lennon (1991:182), an error is “a linguistic form or combination of forms which, in the same context and under the same context and under similar conditions of production, would, in all likelihood, not be produced by the speakers’ native speaker counterparts.” Corder (1967), on the other hand, differentiates between the mistake which is a performance error due to a random guess or slip and the error that refers to idiosyncrasies in the interlanguage of the learner manifesting the learner’s system of operation while learning. The later can be seen as

a deviation from the adult's grammar of a native speaker which reflects the interlanguage of the learner.

### **3.3. Classification of Errors**

Researchers of language learning provide different procedures for the classification of errors. Burt and Kiparsky (1974) make distinction between global errors and local errors. Global errors are those which make effect on the structure of a sentence as a whole, while the local ones are those with which just one constituent is affected. On a global level, Corder (1973) makes a classification into: omission of some required element, addition of some unnecessary or incorrect element, selection of an incorrect element, and misordering of elements. Each category undergoes a given level of language, phonology, morphology, lexicon, syntax and discourse.

Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982: 50) propose four categories namely, omission, addition, misformation, and misordering defined as follows:

- a- Omission: the absence of an item that must appear in well-formed utterance.
- b- Addition: the presence of an item that must not appear in a well-formed utterance.
- c- Misformation: the use of the wrong morpheme or structure.
- d- Misordering: the incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance.

Similarly, Brown (2000:122) suggested that errors can be “described as errors of addition, omission, substitution and ordering.”

### 4.3. Strengths and Weaknesses of EA

Buteau (1970:144) highlights the importance of EA saying that “error basis- based analyses” are fruitful and, at the same time, needed to find the answer and the reliabilities of hypotheses in second language learning. In the same direction, Brown (1980) advocates E A as an alternative for CA. He believes that:

- A small amount of errors in L2 learning is originated from learners’ mother tongue,
- CA predicts some errors which are not made by learners, and
- Similar errors occur in learning the same target language whatever the learner’s backgrounds languages are.

Meanwhile, he emphasizes something about EA that can make a problem: “it may overstress the importance of production data.” (Ibid:64)

To develop a framework about second language learning, it is important to place a concern for data production, but to comprehend it is equally important. Halliday (1964) gives two ways for the analysis of errors: descriptive or comparative. The first one results in a simpler correction and has the advantage of allowing all students’ backgrounds; this is what makes it a more preferable method. On the other hand, if the error is believed to result from interference, it can be examined “comparatively” coming from the learner’s native language. But, this way can be used for a limited scope with learners of the same native language.

By the year of 1980 onwards, there were a lot of criticisms that cause a loss in EA popularity. One of the most problematic issues with EA is that it defines and categories errors



following subjective procedures for their analysis. It, also, classifies errors according to their frequency of occurrence without giving an explanatory function.

Schechter (1974) goes on the same direction of criticism to add that EA focuses on errors and ignores avoidance. He states that the learner who avoids using a particular form in a language may believe, incorrectly, to master it.

Hence, taking all these weaknesses of EA into consideration, Duskova (1969:65) concludes, after conducting a study on Czech postgraduate students, that “the value of CA cannot be underestimated, both as a means of preventing and remedying errors”. A summary of EA weaknesses can be found in Dulay, Burt and Krashen’s (1982) study. They put it into three main points:

- a) The description of errors is confused with their explanation,
- b) Definitions of errors categories are not precise and specific, and
- c) Causes of learner’s errors are oversimplified.

#### **4. Interlanguage Theory**

The traditional view of errors as instances of mislearning has been changed to use errors as a means for testing their hypotheses. Selinker argues that there is “a separate linguist system based on the observed output which results from a learner’s attempted production of a target language norm” (1972:35). This view was, indeed, advocated especially after the existence of a different theory about second language learning: Nemser’s “approximate language” (1971), Selinker’s “Interlanguage” (1972). Moreover, Coper (1970:309) points out that second language learners adopt a systematic way in the process of learning a second

language. In this process, Azevedo (1980) finds out gaps that can be filled by the mother tongue at different linguistic levels. He suggests, then, that “the study of interlanguage should take into account not only errors of different types but also “non-errors”, that is, correct constructions which might have contained the same errors.”(63) Following this method, he adds, would help to give a clear distinction of language areas that are mastered and those that need further work by instructors. Hence, Interlanguage can be seen as the appropriate means to make a complete cut between CA and EA. It is the descriptive study of learners’ errors. Interlanguage is identified with a basic reference to L1 and L2. CA is a predictive study that examines some Interlanguage features of learners through the comparison of L1/L2. EA, on the other hand, develops as an operation of comparing the Interlanguage of learners with L2

## **Part Two: English Versus Arabic Possession**

### **1. English Possessive Case**

#### **1.1. The genitive case:-‘s**

In present day English, the –s marker indicating possession is separated from its stem noun and placed immediately after the entire phrase. Hockett (1958) indicates that “English has a genitival particle which is a person, animal, or period of time: john’s hat; the man’s umbrella; the Mayor of Boston’s wife; a day’s journey.”

Moreover, the English language is said to be rich with syncretism. Thus, the verb ending “s” assumes a triple function. This morpheme indicates person (third), number (singular) and tense (present). Syncretism is also advancing in the nominal case inflection, where the distinction in form remains only between a common case and a genitive case. In other words, after –s of the plural noun, the genitive marker disappears. This can be shown in eg. 1. It is also the case in some foreign words and proper names as it is shown, for instance, in eg. 2.

1) I respect:

- a) the teacher (singular)
- b) the teachers (plural)
- c) the teacher’s (singular genitive) power.
- d) the teachers’ (plural genitive) power.

CF. The mice’s tails. (Halpern,1995:103)

2) a): Each of these different birds will respond to its own species' song. (Latinized nouns)  
(Stumberger, 1981:793)

b): Gus' house. (proper nouns)

The genitive case is used as an indication for independence of a noun to the following one. This case, mostly, is a correspondence to a structure with *of*: Jane's reaction- the reaction of Jane. (Baum, 1981)

Making the difference between *s/of* usage used to indicate possession is a highly complex matter for L2 learners. This is also the case for L1 learners, as the two markers are in some case inter-changeable 'the man's name' can be written as 'the name of the man'. However, English native speakers may prefer to use one pattern rather than another. Murica and Freeman (1983:126) examine the study made by Khampang about the preference of English native speakers of the possessive marker over the "of" form. Accordingly, they assert that:

“... the native speakers preferred the *s* form whenever the head noun was animate. Moreover the native speaker preferred the *s* form even with inanimate head nouns when the noun could be viewed as performing an action, e.g.:

The train's arrival was delayed.

Was preferred over

The arrival of the train was delayed.”

So, this exhibits the possibility of finding certain rules of "of/'s" usage known for native speakers that could be helpful for L1 learners. Moreover, this flexibility of usage in

most cases is the direct cause of confusion among English learners. They tend to seek for simplified grammar rules. Murcia and Freeman (Ibid) state that many ESL/EFL texts will inform the learner to use the -‘s form with human head nouns and the -of form with nonhuman nouns. Meanwhile, oversimplification in grammar in the process of communication can be wrong since there are always exceptions. Hence, simplified grammar texts can be taken as one reason of L2 learners’ errors of this type.

### 1.1.2. Basic Rules

There are basic rules that show which form of the genitive (‘s/s’/) is appropriate. The following table illustrates them.

N Category	Rule	Example
Singular proper noun	Add ‘s	House_ house’s
Singular proper noun ending in -s	Add -‘s or an apostrophe only	Mr. James house Mr. James house’s
Regular proper noun	Add an apostrophe only	Boys’ ,buses’
Irregular proper noun not ending in -s	Add -‘s	Men’s , children’s
One, something, everyone, each other ...etc	Add -‘s	One’s house, somebody’s house, somebody’s house...etc

Table1: Basic Rules (Folly and Hall, 2005:185)

### 1.1.3. Special Rules

These occur when:

1) Two genitives come together as in the following example: We were beginning to get fed up with our neighbours' tenant's loud music.

2) The genitive can occur without a following noun if the context where the utterance occurs shows clearly the meaning:

E.g. That is not my hand writing. It is Selina's. (Selina's handwriting)

3) When the form of the possessive contains a compound noun or two or more nouns formulating a single team, the last noun is the only one which takes -'s:

E.g.1: Are you coming to my brother-in-law's party? (Compound noun)

4) If the two nouns that occur in the possessive do not form a single team, -'s is used with both nouns:

E.g. Schrodinger's and Heisenberg's version of quantum mechanics had seemed different.  
(Two versions of the theory.)

5) An " 's" is used at the end of the phrase, when the possessive noun is part of a short phrase:

E.g. \* The man's in the corner dog began to bark.

The man in the corner's dog began to bark. This means that the dog belongs to the man in the corner. (Folly and Hall, 2005)

### 1.1.4. Double Possessive: of structure+ genitive

The genitive marker and the “of structure” can occur at the same time in the same phrase if the purpose is to put a given noun in a specific place. In addition to that, it aims to show that the noun is one of several; the indefinite article is usually accompanied with it: E.g. I heard the story from a friend of my brother’s. (From one of my brother’s friends). The second noun doesn’t always include the genitive –‘s. E.g. They got a tip off a friend of the owner. (Baum, 1981)

### 1.1.5. The genitive –s or of structure

a) There are certain rules that show where to use the genitive –s and not the “of structure”. The following table illustrates them with examples.

When to use	Example
1- To refer to a general ownership or possession of somebody’s home.	-Have you seen Sheila’s new car? -We’ll be at Mum’s soon.( Mum’s house)
2- To refer to people and animals (especially with proper nouns) and to personal/professional relationships and human qualities.	-Sheila is Harold’s youngest daughter. -Do you like snap’s new colour? -Have you met the boss’s new secretary? -John’s intransigence is a pain.
3- To refer to the origin of something.	-Have you seen the poem in today’s observer? But not: * It was in the 19 <sup>th</sup> December’s paper.
4- To refer to location in time but not dates.	-Oil is Saudi Arabia’s biggest export. -The “St Matthew Passion is Bach’s most profound work.
5- To refer to a quality or measure: duration, distance, value.	-There will be an hour’s delay. -The hotel was ten minutes drive from the beach.
6- To express value or quantity with worth.	-Could you give a pound’s worth chips?

7- With names of shops, companies	-I'm getting the thanks giving shopping at Macy's. (Macy's department store) -Was there anything nice at the butcher's this morning? (the butcher's shop)
8- It occurs in certain fixed expressions	-She was at death's door. For God's sake! -For pity's sake! For heaven's sake!

Table2: Special Rules (Folly and Hall, 2005:186)

b) The genitive –s or the \_of structure is used in expressing ideas shown in the following table:

Use	Example
1-To refer to a quality that something possesses or displays (but we prefer to use the genitive with human qualities)	-We were amazed by the ship's sheer size. -We were amazed by the sheer size of the ship.
2- To refer to the subject of something, its topic or theme.	-The queen's portrait has caused dismay. -The portrait of the queen has caused dismay.
3- With human creation such as countries, organization, machines...etc(the genitive is more common)	-Radio City Musical Hall is of New York's most famous theatres. -Plane trees are common sight on the streets of London.
4- Expressing a reason or purpose with sake.	-We agreed to make a go of it for the sake of children/ The children's sake.

Table3: Genitive “s” or “of structure”(Ibid)

c): Genitive+ of structure



The genitive “ ‘s” or of structure can be used to show different types of relationships. In order not to make confusion between nouns used to describe more than one relationship in the same phrase, the genitive “ ‘s” is preferable for the origin, owner or creator while the of structure for the subject or topic:

E.g.1 I wasn't convinced by *the witness's description of the quarrel*.

E.g.2 One of our most popular exhibits is *Van Duck's portrait of King Charles*.

d)New information with the -of structure:

The “of structure” can be used to add new information, more than the principal information found in the sentence.

E.g. American presidential candidate Robert Kennedy was assassinated in 1968.

\* He was former president John F Kennedy's younger brother.

He was the younger brother of former president John F Kennedy.

The new information is the reference to John F Kennedy. (Fally and Hall: 2005)

## **2. Arabic Possession**

In an article entitled “Possessive Construction in Arabic”, Guella (2007) makes a cross-dialectal comparative analysis of constructions. In his cross linguistic study, he includes the Magreb dialects and some of the dialects in the Arabic Gulf to discuss the different strategies contributing to the expression of possession. The paper discusses seven strategies used to show a relationship between a possessor and a possessed as follows:

### **1. Strategy1: Possessed+ possessor**

It is the case where two nouns follow each other to express a relation of possession or association as when we say: bent el-qayed (the daughter of the qayed). Here, we cannot

separate the two nouns by a mediator. If the possessed is qualified by an adjective, it should appear after the possessor. For example: Ba:b ed-da:r el-mherres (the broken door of the house). However, if the first noun is followed by more than one noun, only the last substantiative, the possessor is marked by determinacy as shown in the following examples:

1-Ba:b da:r el-qayed. (The door of the qayed's house)

2-Lu:n ba:b da:r es-soltane. (The door's wood of the soltan's house).

3-Lu:n lu:h ba:b da:r es-soltane. (The colour of the door's wood of the soltan's house)

## **2. Strategy2: possessor+ possessed**

This strategy is ancient and can be found mainly in the Gulf countries. Here, many nouns that show possession are combined with substantives such as:” abu, umm, dhu, ahl, sa:heb”, etc. In this strategy, Guella (Ibid) distinguishes between two cases:

### **Case one: Abu, umm, etc +possessed**

This can be seen as in the example: ahl es-sunna (Sunna followers). It is worth noting here that the expression “abu/umm+ possessed” is generally employed as forms of address: abu Hamza.

### **Case two: Possessed+ abu, umm, etc + possessed:**

It is used as an extensive of case1 and it, often, appears in the speech of Gulf countries showing specific possession.

E.g.: es-sayyara abu arba' 'ajalaat. (The car (having) four wheels) Holes (1984) said that abu and umm can be used with a feminine/masculine possessed. He adds that constructions of this kind make a situation that is “a strange fact of grammar” as in the following examples:

E.g.1 Musajjila umm mikrufuun thabit.

E.g. 2 Abu ‘uyuun fattana.

These two examples show the strategy suggested by Holes:

Possessor+ abu + feminine possessor.

Possessor+ umm + masculine possessed.

This strategy has four main restrictions. For instance, Magreb countries use the classical patterns such as:

‘El-weld muul le-ktaab’, versus, ‘El-bint mulaat le-ktaab’.

### **3. Strategy3:** Hagg, tab’/ Hagg + definite possessor

As the pattern shows ‘hagg’ is used as a possessive marker. This can be found widely in Saudi Arabia. The indefinite can occur with this construction meaning “belonging to”.

E.g. Alkitab hagg al-horma (The book belonging to the woman). Instead of hagg, we can find ‘tab’ ‘ as used in Syria and Lebanon.

E.g. Haad al-saajiq taba’na. (This driver is ours)

### **4. Strategy 4:** possessed+ maal+ possessor

The term “maal” can be found in Bahrain and surrounding countries as a possessive marker (the term in Magreb countries means what’s wrong with you).

E.g.1. Hal-akil muu maalkum. (This food order is not yours)

Eg.2. Ittawla haadhi shu r-raqam maalha? (What’s the number of this table?)

### **5. Strategy5:** possessed+ -en+ Det. +possessor

This strategy constitutes the suffix marker –en attached to the possessed. It is widely used in the Algerian urban dialects and those of Morocco. Meanwhile,-en occurrence is limited

to a few kinship terms:

E.g.1. Yemmaay-en el-bent. (The girl's mother)

E.g.2. Xaay-en er-raajel. (The man's brother)

**6. Strategy6:** possessed+ possessor+ ntaa'+ possessor.

The origin of this structure is attributed to a Berber influence. The Arabic possessive pronoun ntaa' is a replacement of the Berber genitive suffix –en.

E.g. xaa-h ntaa' raajel-ha. (Her husband's brother). As Guella (1983) notes, this situation gives rise to a peculiar strategy of double possession marking, where the cataphoric possessor pronoun makes a progressive reference to the possessor proper.

**7. Strategy7:** possessor+ adjectival+ preposition+ possessed.

In the strategy, the construction takes the genitive of the possessed noun as a basis which comes from the French construction “Sylvie est jolie des yeux”. Frie (1939), the founder of this construction, calls this construction “Le type converse” and contrasts it with “le tour direct”, as shown in the following examples:

E.g.1. Sylvie a des jolies yeux, and

E.g. 2. Les yeux de Sylvie sont jolies

A similar situation can be found in Arab countries:

E.g. 1) Elmogheni halg-u xshiin

2) Halg el mughenni xshiin

-Elmoughani xshin mi n halgu (direct construction)

It is worth noting, here, that the converse type obtains only if the possessor and the possessed are of one and the same substance or enter in a possessive relationship of part/whole.

Moreover, a possessive pronoun must go with the possessed noun to refer to the possessor.

### **Conclusion**

Making errors is considered a sign of learning in the process of learning a foreign language. Both contrastive analysis and error analysis pay considerable attention to this process. They indicate some strengths and weaknesses. But, needless to say that both are important for research on language learning to enhance some ambiguous points which still hold back learners. This study is an attempt to tackle an error type made by learners of English as a foreign language. It is tried, from what has been said so far, to show the difference between English possession and that of Arabic. In the following part learners' errors in the application of the English possessive case will be analyzed.

## **Chapter 2: The Students' Test**

### **Introduction**

As mentioned before, this research aims at investigating the pitfalls students of English face in the application of possessive case rules. This chapter investigates the difficulties students are confronted with when they come to use expressions containing possession, and how they differentiate between the use of “s” and the “of structure” indicating possession. It supports the theoretical part of the work since it gives details of the methodology applied in the research. After the collection of data through a test, a detailed analysis is provided in order to locate the weaknesses of the students and the various causes that lie behind.

### **1. The Test:**

#### **1.1. The Sample**

The test is given to twenty, third year students, randomly chosen from the department of Foreign Languages, Mentouri University, Constantine. The limited number of students, used to investigate errors of “s/ of” usage indicating possession, is the result of time constraints. These students have been studying English grammar for about eight years (Starting from the Intermediate school).

#### **2.1. Description of the test**

This test is of a grammatical nature. It consists of three parts in the form of exercises. The first one is composed of ten sentences in which the students have to choose the right alternative of the two forms of possession (‘s/of).

In the second exercise, the students have to choose the correct sentences with correct expressions of possession, then find the mistakes and correct them.

The last exercise, however, is composed of six sentences which include the meaning of possession. Here, they are asked to rewrite them using genitive forms ('s/of).

### 3.1. Methods of the study

This is a descriptive study whose source of data consists of twenty copies of the test. They are undertaken by students of English approaching their final stage of study, as a requirement for the accomplishment of their undergraduate study.

The errors in each copy are identified and numbered. They are, then, analyzed to determine the type of each and, eventually, classified. The data are described to explain the way surface structures are altered, whether necessary elements are omitted, and unnecessary elements added, or elements are misformed or misordered. The analysis of error types will be presented in tables showing the distribution of each error type in the twenty test copies.

The test embodies three hundred and three errors in each copy ranging from one to fifteen errors. The following table shows the number of errors of the two possessive markers together with other grammatical errors and their proper use.

	of	's	Other Grammatical Errors
Errors	17	49	63
Proper Use	49	191	/

Table4: Number of Errors

## 2. Data Analysis

Based on linguistic categories, most of the errors found in the test copies are of a morphological category. They are classified into the following types:

- 1) Confusion over usage,
- 2) Wrong placement of the apostrophe,
- 3) Omission of the apostrophe,
- 4) Unnecessary insertion of the apostrophe,

5) Other grammatical errors. The following table shows the number of errors in each error type.

Types of Errors	Number of Errors
Confusion over usage	72
Wrong placement of the apostrophe	36
Omission of apostrophe	62
Unnecessary insertion of the apostrophe	7
Other grammatical errors	63

Table5: Categorization of errors

## 3. Patr1: Test of Knowledge

The aim of this test is to examine the students' knowledge or skills when they come to express possession. It is in the first place a test to their performance in their process of learning English as a foreign language. As mentioned previously, this exercise consisting of



ten (10) sentences, is a direct choice between the two alternatives of the genitive markers ('s/of).

The following sentences are the correct ones that students should normally write:

- What did you do at the end of the course?
- Have you met Sam's new girl friend?
- Barcelona's architecture/ The architecture of Barcelona is a constant of inspiration.
- I need to visit the doctor's surgery.
- The Ninth Symphony is arguably Beethoven's greatest work.
- My husband's impatience sometimes drives me up the wall.
- We are going to hold the party at Michael's place.
- Researchers have been amazed by the virus's ability/ the ability of the virus to mutate when attacked.
- Why cannot you just hand in your notice for Heaven's sake!
- Galliano's latest designs at the Paris Fashion Shows.

The analysis of the errors in this part shows that the most spread type is that of 'confusion over usage'. The examples bellow, taken from the undertaken test, has been tagged with square brackets [ ] to indicate the markers' corrections.

a) What did you do at the end of the course?

...[ at the course's end]

b) Have you met the new girlfriend of Sam?

...[ Sam's new girlfriend]

c) I need to visit the surgery of the doctor.

...[ the doctor's surgery]

d) Why cannot you just hand in your notice for the sake of heaven!

...[for heaven's sake!]

e) The latest designs of Galliano are generating a lot of excitement at the Paris Fashion Shows.

...[Galliano's latest designs]

It can be considered that the errors shown above derive from an insufficient understanding of 's/ of usages. It seems to be fairly difficult for the students to distinguish between them. The following table shows the number of errors they made concerning the type of confusion over usage.

	Errors	Proper Use
of	17	49
's	55	191
Total	72	240

Table6: Number of errors in confusion over usage.

### 1.3. Discussion

The results indicate that the students are uncertain of the correct usage of the genitive markers. Here, they are asked to make a direct choice in order to see their ability to make the difference between "of/s" usages. Since "of "and "s" are interchangeable, it can be considered to be one of the causes of most errors surveyed in error samples. This study provided a view and an indication of the kinds of errors second language learners produced in writing tasks in the classroom. For instance, though it is indicated at the bottom of this part of the test that in some cases both options are correct, most students made only one choice in all cases. This is another proof that they are not able to recognize when both alternatives are correct and when they are not.

The following table shows the percentage of each category of errors made in the test samples. It indicates that confusion between the two markers of possession has the highest percentage, followed by omission and unnecessary insertion with nearly the same percentage. Then, comes wrong placement, and, finally, grammatical errors with the lowest percentage.

Category of Error	Percentage of occurrence
-Confusion over Usage	30%
-Wrong placement of the Apostrophe	15%
-Omission of the Apostrophe	25,83%
-Unnecessary Insertion of the Apostrophe	2,91%
-Other Grammatical Errors	26,25%

Table7: The Percentage of Error Categories

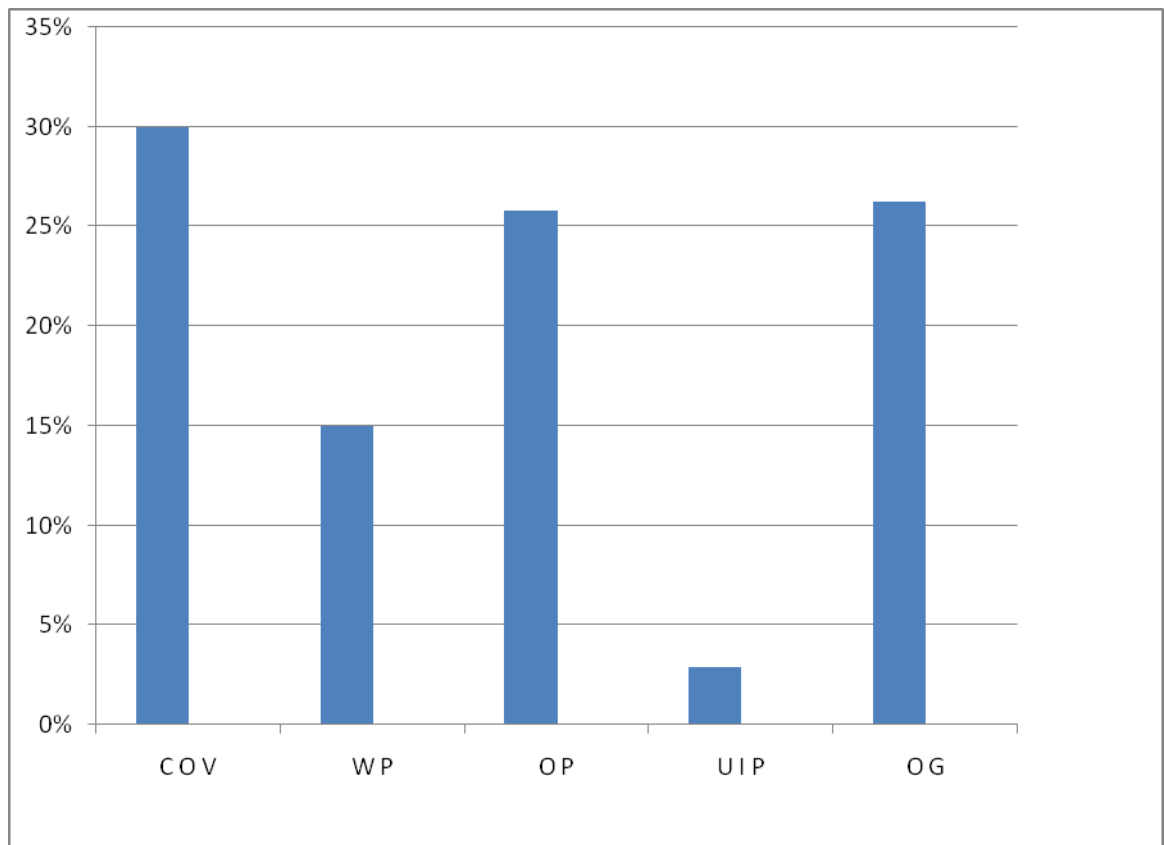


Figure1: Percentage of Error Categories.

C O V: Confusion Over Usage.

W P: Wrong Placement of the Apostrophe.

OP: Omission of the Apostrophe.

U I P: Unnecessary Insertion of the Apostrophe.

O G: Other Grammatical Errors.

The most striking point is that students tend to use the 'of structure' instead of 's'. They fear to make mistakes, and overcome this by the use of the 'of structure'. For example, in the following instances students were not able to apply the rule that says the 's' is used to refer to a general ownership, but not the 'of structure': 'the surgery of the doctor', 'the latest designs of Galliano', 'the greatest work of Beethoven'.

From another angle, as it is mentioned before, most students do not know when to supply the correct markers. For instance, in utterances like 'researchers have been amazed by the virus's ability/ ability of the virus to mutate when attacked'; many students do not indicate that both choices are right. Besides, some of them affected by the expression that "both alternatives can be used in some cases", used both choices in every sentence in the test sample.

Furthermore, the students are not able to recognize the special rules of "s" usage. Those special rules occur in fixed expressions like the one used in the test: for heaven's sake!

Moreover, as the above table might suggest, the students made seventeen errors confusing the use of "of" with "s". In fact, just one sentence of the sample test contains the case where students should choose the "of structure" instead: "What did you do at the end of the course?" but not "at the course's end".

So, from all what has been said so far, it can be inferred that students' errors are due to their poor understanding of "s" rules of usage. They are, also, unable to make a differentiation between the two genitive markers, and are bewildered because they cannot decide what to choose.

#### 4. Part2: The Analysis of Exercise 2 Results

- 1- Elizabeth is his good friend.
- 2- I am really fed up with my landlord's wife's endless complaints.
- 3- As the English say, one's home is one's castle.
- 4- You should pay attention to what he says: he is a close associate of managing director/  
director's
- 5- Do not blame him, it was my own fault.
- 6- She is been in charge of children's activities at the summer time.
- 7- Since they got married they have only been interested in each other.
- 8- My brother-in-law's parents have decided to emigrate.
- 9- We do not know him very well; he is just our acquaintance from university days.
- 10- There is something wrong with that bus's brake lights

In this part, the students were asked to find the sentences which contain mistakes so as to correct them. The majority of them did not stick to the instruction stated at the beginning of the exercise. They tried to correct even right sentences. Some others, however, corrected what they could and left the others as they were without saying whether they are right or wrong.

After the correction of students' test sample, it is found the types mentioned previously in (2.Data Analysis). The analysis shows that the students were not able to recognize the mistakes found in the test samples. This could be indicated during the time when undertaking the test. They tried to ask each other about the answers and the correct sentences.

This part of the test is an attempt to see students' ability to use the right utterances of the English morphology. In other words, they were asked to find mistakes concerning the different cases where the {'/'s/s'} are to be used. This part also contained other grammatical

mistakes. The discussion has been left to the end of the third part because we found the same types of errors in both parts.

### **5. Part3: The Analysis of Exercise 3 Results**

- 1- I am sure this is somebody's bag.
- 2- Let us go to the girls' shop.
- 3- That is Mr. Hollis' /Hollis's hotel.
- 4- My next-door neighbour's dog never stops barking.
- 5- My mother's and father's personality are very alike.
- 6- The new act of parliament will protect everyone's right to privacy.

The students were asked to rewrite the six sentences having the meaning of possession but without possessive markers. They should, here, normally provide the above ones. It is a test to their understanding of possessive case rules especially that of “ 's”. It contains also other grammatical mistakes since the students were asked to write full sentences.

In part one, we have already discussed one type of the errors made by students in the expression of possession. The following is the discussion of other types of errors found in the test samples. Generally, four error types are identified, in addition to the one discussed before, which some instances of are still found in both part 2 and 3.



## 6. Discussion

### 1.6 Confusion over usage

The following examples are some instances of this category discussed in part1. However, it is preferred to add those found in these two parts in order to show the disability of students to express possession following the appropriate rules. The appropriate correction is written between brackets. The original utterance is written first.

a) Let us go to the shop the girls own.

- Let us go to the shop of the girls.

[Let us go to the girls' shop.]

b) There is something wrong with that buses' brake lights.

-There is something wrong with the brake lights of the buses.

[There is something wrong with that bus's brake lights.]

c) My brother's-in-law parents have decided to emigrate.

-The parents of my brother-in-law have decided to emigrate.

[My brother-in-law's parents have decided to emigrate.]

d) The dog belonging to my next-door neighbour never stops barking.

-The dog of my next-door neighbour never stops barking.

[My next-door neighbour's dog never stops barking.]

e) That is the state hotel belonging to Mr. Hollis.

-That is the state hotel of Mr. Hollis.

[That is Mr. Hollis's state hotel.]

These examples, in addition to what has been indicated so far, were the most common types of errors in the test samples. It is a direct indication of the poor knowledge students have in the area.

## **2.6. Wrong placement of the apostrophe**

As has been mentioned in the theoretical part, students learning a second language can be affected by their first language knowledge which leads to interference. The following were just some instances of the above types; and the discussion is going to appear later in this part. These instances show that the students trying to express possession failed to place the apostrophe between the possessor and the possessed. The correction is indicated between brackets.

1-Let us go to shop's girls.

[Let us go to the girls' shop.]

2- The state's hotel of Mr. Hollis.

[Mr. Hollis's state hotel.]

3-My brother's in law parents/ My brother in law parent's have decided to emigrate.

[My brother is law's parents have decided to emigrate.]

4- I am sure this belongs to somebody bags.

[I am sure this is somebody's bag.]

5-My next-door neighbour dog's never stops barking.

[My next-door neighbour never stops barking.]

6- She is been put in charge of childrens activities' at the summer time.

[She is been put in charge of children's' activities at the summer time]

7-There is something wrong with that brake light's buses.

[There is something wrong with that bus's brake lights.

These are the most common errors where students failed to place the apostrophe correctly. It is another indication of their insufficient understanding of “ ‘s” especially in instances 3 and 5 where the possessor is composed of more than one word.

### **3.6. Omission of the Apostrophe**

In this type of errors students failed to recognize the possessor. It also appears when the possessor is more than one person. Here, the problem is to whom the possessive marker is to be put. The following are some examples of this error type found in the test samples.

1-My father and my mother's personality are very alike.

[My father's and my mother's personality are very alike.]

2-The new act of parliament will protect the right everyone to privacy.

[The new act of parliament will protect everyone's right to privacy.

3-Let us go to the girls shop.

[Let us go to the girl's shop.]

4-I am really fed up with my landlord's wive endless complaints.

[I am really fed up with my landlord's wife's endless complaints.

5-There is something wrong with that buses brake lights.

[There is something wrong with that bus's brake lights.]

6-As the English say, one home is one castle.

[As the English say, one's home is one's castle.]

7-She is been put in charge of children activities at the summer time.

[She is been put in charge of children's activities at the summer time.]

As it is clearly indicated in the above examples, the “s” marker after the apostrophe was also omitted in some cases. Here, both cases were included in the same category because it was thought that the omission of the apostrophe led in most cases to the omission of the “s”. This error type is another indication of the students' poor understanding of different rules where to put “ /'s” and where to omit it.

#### **4.6. Unnecessary Insertion of the Apostrophe**

1-Let's go to the girls's shop.

[Let us go to the girls' shop.]

2-We do not know him very well; he is just our acquaintance from university's days.

[We do not know him very well he is just our acquaintance from university days.]

3-The new act of parliament's will protect the right of everyone to privacy.

[The new act of parliament will protect everyone's right to privacy.]

These types of errors are not widely spread. The errors found occurred in the same utterances, that is to say, the students found the difficulty in the same utterances. In some cases, the unnecessary insertion was that of the “s” but it was included in the same category.

## 5.6. Other Grammatical Errors

If they were considered together, it can be said that the grammatical errors were the most frequent pattern in this test. It included errors in the use of prepositions, verb concord, tense, punctuation,...etc. The following are some examples:

1-That is belonging to Mr. Hollis' state hotel.

[That is Mr. Hollis' state hotel.]

2-Let us go to the girls' own shop.

[Let us go to the girls' shop.]

3-I am really fed up with my landlord's wave endless complaints.

[I am really fed up with my landlord's wife's endless complaints.]

4-As the English say, "ones' home is castle."

[As the English say, ones' home is ones' castle.]

5-Since they got married they had only been interested in each other.

[Since they got married they have only been interested in each other.]

6-You should pay attention to what he said: he is a close associate of managing director.

[You should pay attention to what he says: he is a close associate of managing director's.]

7-The personality of my mother and father are very alike.]

[My mother's and father's personality are very alike.]

8-She is put in charge of childrens' activities at the summer time.

[She is been put in charge of children's activities at the summer time.]

9-That is the Mr. Hollis's state hotel.

[That is Mr. Hollis's state hotel.]

10-Elizabeth is a good friend for him.

[Elizabeth is his good friend.]

These errors, in the grammatical function, show students' poor knowledge in different areas of the English grammar. Our research is not oriented towards discussing such areas. However, we devote some of our analysis to speak about them for further researches concerned with second language learning.

What is not understood here is that at the beginning of each part, especially part2, students are given instructions to correct errors related to possessive markers. They neglected the instruction and kept correcting what was right and were induced in errors. This would indicate and reflect their poor knowledge of the English Grammar. The following part is an attempted discussion of the results found in part 1 and 2 with a relation to the theoretical part.

## **7. Results of Error analysis**

As mentioned in the theoretical part, "of" and " 's" are interchangeable. This can be considered to be one of the causes of all errors surveyed in the error samples. In this case, that is to say, the case of Arab learners of English as a second language, however, there is another cause of errors involving "of/'s" usage. It was already mentioned in the theoretical part about the Arabic way of expressing possession which is in many ways different from that used by the English native speakers. In Arabic, it is expressed simply by the insertion of "al" to the possessor. In other dialects of the Arabic language, as we mentioned before, *taba3*, *hag*, *dyal*...etc are also used. For example, in English the phrase "a friend's car" can be changed to

“the car of a friend” by exchanging positions of the two nouns and placing “of” in between. In Arabic we cannot do that: a possessed cannot come after the possessor except for the case mentioned in the theoretical part which is an ancient one and mostly found in the classical Arabic\*. The previous phrase can be expressed in Arabic as: "سيارة الصديق" which means that the Arab learners are affected by the way of expressing possession in their language.

This can be the reason why some students used expressions like:” this is somebody bag’s”, “state hotel’s of Mr. Hollis”. They were not capable of understanding how to express possession between two noun phrases because they had something different in their language. Hence, they tried to compare the rules of their language with those of English and searched for something similar. Since they put the definite article *al* or the indefinite article in their dialect (taba3, dyal...etc) before the possessor at the end, they did the same in English and put the “ ‘s” as in “ bag’s” because either it occurred at the end or it was the second noun.

In some examples like “My next-door neighbor, my brother-in-law” most students failed to place the possessive marker correctly. As they do not have expressions like these in their language, they did not put it in the appropriate place. They used “my next-door neighbor dog’s, my brother’s in law parents”. The students tried to make matters easy by looking for the place which seemed -for them- better. Since, they have not cases like these, where the possessor is an adverb or a preposition, they placed it directly after the noun as it is found in their language. Such errors can easily be traced to interference from L1: interlingual errors.

Moreover, there is a category of errors in which the students seem to be influenced by their native language. For example, in Arabic, we can say “شخصيتا ابي و امي”. In English, this can be expressed as “The personality of my father and that of my mother” or “my father’s and my mother’s personality”. In the test samples we found expressions like: “My mother and

father's personality", "My mother and father personality" and "The personality of my mother and father". The students, here, tried to put what is found in their language as a key to express what is ambiguous for them. This leads to negative transfer; and hence, they make errors.

Besides, it is worth mentioning that some students used the preposition "for" as a marker to express possession when they failed to use "of/s". For instance, we found expressions like: "This bag is for somebody" when they are asked to write "this is somebody's bag". Here, they think that "for" has the meaning of "ل" in Arabic which means "belonging to". So, they used it as a strategy to avoid making errors thinking that it was the appropriate. However, they erred and showed an insufficient understanding of possession.

Consequently, it is clear that learners of English as a foreign language are very strongly influenced by their native language when dealing with "of/s" in writing. It appears difficult for them to learn possession of English in isolation from the Arabic one. Their different ways of expressing it leads to misconception that both can replace each other. It also leads them to over simplified ways by looking for other strategies like the use of prepositions, as a key to avoid possessive markers. This can be one of the reasons why Arab learners of English cannot write with accuracy and fluency.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis of students' errors shows the kinds of errors found in classrooms. It is a clear indication that in their process of learning, learners are affected by their first knowledge of their native language. Through the analysis, it is tried to locate the errors making reference to the first language of learners. Hence, it can be said that, learning a second language is inseparable from making errors and interference from the first language.



## **General Conclusion**

The study examines the errors made by university learners in the application of English possessive case. The findings show that learners make reference to their first language while they are learning English as a foreign language. They, also, reveal that learners are unable to master rules of possession. In view of the forgoing, we would like to suggest that teachers should employ contrastive and error analysis techniques in the teaching of the English language. Needless to say that the study of errors committed by language learners is a fruitful method of diagnosing language teaching problems and identifying the properties of the language system of the learner. This area of research remains, henceforth, a central issue and a fundamental matter in second language acquisition.

## ملخص

ويهدف هذا المشروع أساسا إلى تحديد الأخطاء الرئيسية ومعرفة أسباب أو مصادر الأخطاء في استخدام علامات الملكية في اللغة الانجليزية. وقد اختير طلبة السنة الثالثة جامعي لقسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة منتوري ، قسنطينة لإجراء هذا البحث. وأجريت هذه الدراسة في إطار النظر إلى استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية لهذه العلامة بطريقة مختلفة عن اللغة العربية. بالإضافة إلى أن لديها عدد من القواعد والتراكيب النحوية الصعبة للمتعلمين إتقانها وتطبيقها بطريقة فعالة. استخدمت طريقة الاختبار لجمع البيانات. بعد التعرف على أنماط الخطأ ، مصادر مختلف أخطاء المتعلمين وتحليلها. نتائج هذه الدراسة تكشف عن كون مصادر أخطاء المتعلمين معقدة ومتعددة الجوانب من خلال تحليل مصادر أخطاء غير في تعلم اللغة الانجليزية كلغة وتؤكد الدراسة أن التدخل من اللغة العربية ، اللغة الأم للمتعلمين ، هي العامل الرئيسي الذي يؤثر على عملية التعلم ومن الجدير بالذكر أنه ما زالت الأخطاء في استخدام علامات الانكليزية تحدث من قبل طلاب السنة 3 في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية. فيما يتعلق بهذا ، يقترح أن المتعلمين اللغة الإنجليزية ينبغي أن تولي اهتماما كبيرا لقواعد اللغة الإنجليزية.

## Résumé

Ce projet vise principalement à déterminer les principales erreurs et de trouver les causes ou les sources d'erreurs dans l'utilisation de l'anglais marqueur possessif par le 3<sup>e</sup> apprenant année à l'université du département d'anglais de Mentouri, Constantine. Cette étude est menée en vertu de la considération que la possession anglaise est exprimée d'une manière différente de celle de l'arabe. Elle, aussi, a un certain nombre de règles et de structures grammaticales difficiles pour les apprenants de maîtriser et d'appliquer de manière efficace. Une méthode d'essai est utilisée pour recueillir des données. Après avoir identifié les schémas d'erreurs, de diverses sources d'erreurs de l'apprenant sont analysés. Les résultats de l'étude révèlent les sources d'erreurs de l'apprenant à être complexes et à multiples facettes. Grâce à l'analyse des sources d'erreurs possessif en apprentissage de l'anglais comme langue de l'aile antérieure, l'étude confirme que l'interférence de l'arabe, la langue maternelle des apprenants, est le principal facteur qui influe sur leur processus d'apprentissage. Il est à noter que les erreurs dans l'utilisation de l'anglais marqueur possessif sont toujours faites par étudiants de 3<sup>e</sup> année au département d'anglais. En relation avec cela, il est suggéré que les apprenants en anglais devraient accorder une attention considérable à des règles de grammaire anglaise

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