

# THE IMPACT OF ARABIC LANGUAGE ON PRODUCING FRAGMENTS

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## **Abstract**

The present study aims at examining the relationship between first language (Arabic) proficiency and second language (English) writing performance of 35 students from the University of Jordan. In addition, we are also interested in testing the impact of using L1 (Arabic) on producing sentence fragments. For that purpose, we have set two surveys to examine the most common type of fragments produced by our study population. The first survey was a multiple choice survey consisting of 8 sentences written in Arabic along with 3 different choices. The second survey was a sentence-translating one consisting of 6 Arabic sentences and the participants were asked to translate them on their own. Our study population was third-year English language and literature students. The results revealed by our study show that missing-subject fragments were the most common type of fragments produced. The results obtained by our study support the results obtained by previous studies which state that the most common type of writing errors produced may include sentence fragments and other writing errors such as subject-verb agreement and articles. These writing errors are mainly produced due to the negative impact of L1 transfer as L1 speakers rely on their mother tongue when translating certain sentences into the target language L2. The study concludes with some recommendations for teachers to attract the students' attention to such errors.

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**Keywords:** L1, L2, fragments, translation, interference.

## **Introduction**

The impact of the first language (L1) on studying English as a foreign language (L2) has been the subject to debate over the past few decades. Various studies have been conducted to examine the effect of L1 on the accuracy of producing sentences translated into L2. Teaching L2 as a second language is like any other field that changes constantly according to the teaching tools available. For instance, during the grammar-translation period,

the use of L1 was considered as a must. However, with the development of audio-lingual tools which were followed by communicative approaches, the use of L1 has decreased rapidly and almost has been eliminated. Therefore, nowadays L2 educators pay particular attention to avoid the use of L1 during the learning process of a foreign language.

With regards to that issue, there are two opposing groups. The first group supports the integration of L2 while studying a foreign language as they believe that children do not learn in reference to a foreign language. On the other hand, the other group supports the use of L1 when communicating abstract ideas with beginners or when discussing problems that require critical thinking [Mahmoud, 2012]. Focusing on the use of only L2 in classrooms has been the learning basis of the 20<sup>th</sup> century learning methodologies as students get the chance to practice their speaking and listening skills in English and transform that into their written production. In addition, many institutions within the Arab world have prevented the use of L1 inside classrooms. However, that decision contradicts with recent research findings which claim that the use of L1 can help in reducing learner's anxiety and can provide support to L2 learners throughout their learning process [El-dali 2011].

The purpose of our current research is to study some of the factors that influence the writing skills of native Arabic speakers (L1) and its impact on their target language (L2). In our study, we are interested in examining how native Arabic speakers likely are to produce fragments while translating certain Arabic sentences into English.

Sentence fragment is part of a sentence that lacks a subject or a verb and presents an incomplete thought as it only consists of a "fragment" of a thought and therefore it delivers an inconsistent thought which leads to confusing the reader. There are four major types of sentence fragments. These fragments are dependent-word fragments, missing subject fragments, -*ing* and *to* fragments, and added detail fragments. In this paper, we will provide some examples of each type and how to avoid making them by L2 language learners who have Arabic as their L1.

### **Types of fragments**

The first type is the dependent- word fragment which is a group of words that consists of a subject and a verb that cannot stand on its own as a sentence since it starts with subordinating words such as *when*, *because*, *while*, *whether* and *wherever*. For example, when a dependent clause is punctuated and presented as a sentence, it is a fragment since it does not deliver a complete thought [Pasadena City College, 2003].

1. a. When I finish my work [incomplete sentence]
2. a. Because I was tired.

We can correct dependent-word fragment by attaching it to a sentence that either comes before or after the fragment.

1. b. When I finish my work, I go to the gym.
2. b. Because I was tired, I did not attend the party.

Another way to correct dependent-word fragment is to eliminate the dependent word. Since dependent-word fragments have subjects and verbs, eliminating the misleading dependent word can deliver a complete thought.

The second type of fragment is called *-ing* and *to* fragments. In this type, an *-ing* word or *to* comes at the beginning of a word group that lacks a subject or a verb. We can correct this type by changing the *-ing* form of the verb into another form (3b), by adding a helping verb or a new verb to the word group.

3. a. She studies three hours a day. Then going to her music class for an hour.
3. b. She studies three hours a day. Then, she goes to her music class for an hour.
4. a. She was trying to study hard. To get a scholarship.
4. b. She was trying to study hard to get a scholarship

The third type of fragments is called missing-subject fragments which consist of words such as *and*, *but* or *then* followed by a verb and a missing subject. A missing-subject fragment can be corrected by connecting it to the sentence that comes before it or by adding a subject (4b) [Pasadena City College, 2003].

5. a. The student was very smart and always gets good grades. But forgets to do his assignments.
5. b. The student was very smart and always gets good grades. But he forgets to do his assignments.
6. a. She failed her exam. But was not very sad.
6. b. She failed the exam but she was not very sad.

The last type of fragments is known as added- detail fragments. In this type, the writer presents an incomplete thought as if it were complete sentence and keeps on going after the period to provide an added-detail sentence which usually lacks a subject, or a verb, and thus delivers an incomplete thought. In this type, words that are used to add more details like *for example* and *such as* are usually integrated within the overall structure of the sentence group in order to illustrate a concept [Watcharapunyawong& Usaha, 2013]

7. a. She stays awake till a late hour at night. For example, yesterday slept at midnight.
7. b. She stays awake till a late hour at night. For example, yesterday she slept at midnight.
8. a. I prefer Italian food. Especially pizza.

8. b. I prefer Italian food, especially pizza.

### **Literature review**

A study was conducted by Hussein and Mohammed (2010) to examine the impact of L1 [Arabic] in L2 writing skills, which was English in their study. The population group of their study was foundation year students at the University of Qatar. The authors worked as lecturers of English at the University of Qatar and have noticed the negative impact of integrating L1 when transferring written phrases into English. However, according to them, that negative impact is not excluded to the university of Qatar students, but can also be generalized to the majority of native Arabic speakers who are under the process of learning English as a foreign language.

The results of the study revealed that Arabic–Language learners of English may face language problems when writing in English as a result of language differences between English and Arabic. The students tend to make negative transfer of L1 to L2 as they try to compose words and sentences in their native language [L1] and then transfer them into L2. The authors suggest that the negative effect of L1 transfer to L2 can be minimized as the proficiency of L2 increases and, therefore the production of fragments can also be minimized [Hussein and Mohammed, 2010]

Another study was conducted by Al Dohen (2014) to examine the effect of second-language learning on the oral reading and vocabulary skills of native Arabic-speaking. The researcher selected a sample of 80 students, 46 of them are bilingual and 34 are monolinguals. The results revealed in this study support the findings of previous studies which indicate that bilingual students are more likely to achieve better results than monolingual students. In addition, the ability to overcome the native language’s information can also be influenced by the acquired knowledge of the second language. There are many factors that may influence the acquisition of a second language which include the period of studying a foreign language L2, the age at which L2 has been acquired and the level of exposure of L2 [Ibid 2014].

Reineman et al (2002) suggested that the use of L1 while teaching a foreign language should only be limited to communicate ideas that require critical thinking and problem solving. In addition, they claimed that L1 can be used inside homogenous classrooms to support L2 acquisition. They also recommend the use of L1 with beginners as it enables them to take the risk when answering questions, and when teaching grammar to make sure that the students follow proper grammatical instructions [Ibid].

On the other hand, Cook (2001) justifies the use of only L2 while teaching a target language due to three reasons. First, he explains that L2 learning needs to model the acquisition of L1 as separate unique language. Second, in order for the learners to acquire the target language successfully,

they would need to keep L1 and L2 as two separate entities and avoid mixing the two languages. Third, the learners of a target language cannot realize the effective use of the target language if the teacher does not encourage the student to use L1 throughout their learning process.

To sum up, the results that were obtained by different authors indicate that successful acquisition of L2 requires the need of well-informed teachers who are able to modify the techniques that need to be used according to the learners' level of L2 acquisition. Thus, well-informed teachers with plenty of wealth resources will be able to demonstrate different concepts by employing variety of techniques that would help in delivering various concepts effectively with both beginners and high-level students.

Dweik and Abu Al Hommos (2007) have conducted a study to test for the effect of Arabic proficiency on the English writings of bilingual Jordanian students. The study aims at investigating the relationship between Arabic proficiency as a mother tongue and the performance of English writing skills of bilingual secondary school students. The authors postulated that there is a significant relationship between English and Arabic despite the linguistic differences between the two languages. The study group was 20 male students from two public schools in Amman, Jordan. The students were chosen based on their academic achievement in previous years. The results of the study reveal that there is a significant link between Arabic and English as it has been shown that students who were proficient in Arabic writing skills achieved good results in the writing skills of the target language. The results of the study support the essential need of integrating the instruction of writing skills between English and Arabic in order to enhance the level of writing for L2 learners. The transfer of writing skills between different languages can be investigated by testing the relationship of transfer between L1 and L2 and demonstrate the effect of both negative and positive transfer which can be measured by comparing two different groups of native language speakers. The level of similarity between two different languages can be used to predict the contribution of producing negative or positive transfer. However, under some circumstances even if there is a linguistic similarity in terms of structure between English and Arabic, negative transfer can still be produced. Dweik (2000) states that there are various cultural differences between English and Arabic which may contribute to the production of negative transfer. As it has been stated by Dweik (1986)"We, the Arabs, love repetition and alliteration. English, on the other hand, is precise, economic and to the point". However, despite the linguistic and cultural differences between Arabic and English, there is no evidence of any potential issues that may cause any problems in second-language acquisition [Dweik and Abu Al Hommos, 2007].

Sawalmeh (2013) conducted a study to investigate the common written errors that are committed by Saudi learners of English who were enrolled for the foundation year program at the University of Ha'il. The author evaluated the writing skills of the participants by using written essays in English language. These errors have been classified into 7 categories including subject-verb agreement, articles and sentence-fragments. The errors that were committed by the participants were identified and classified according to the type of writing error. Notably, sentence fragments were among the most common type of writing error committed by the participants of the study. The percentage of sentence fragment produced by Saudi learners of English was 11.7 %. Sentence fragment was the third common type of writing error produced by Saudi EFL learners followed by the verb tense and article errors. Sawalmeh [2013] concludes that most of the student's writing errors are due to negative L1 transfer and thus to avoid committing these errors, students would need to avoid using L1 to achieve better results in their target language L2.

The results of this study also support the results obtained by Torrijos (2009) who investigated the impact of L1 interference on the acquisition of a target language L2. The author was particularly interested in studying the influence of Spanish Linguistic rules (L1) on the writing skills of a target language L2 (English). The results of this study reveal that cross-linguistic transfer could be an important determinant of the acquisition of a target language. Therefore, it can be concluded that the impact of L1 transfer could contribute negatively to the acquisition of L2 (Torrijos2009).

### **Participants**

All the participants of our study were enrolled as third-year students at the University of Jordan. The students had a good command of English as they were enrolled in the English Language and Literature program. Therefore, they did not face any problem regarding word-equivalence. However, their main complaint was the use of punctuation marks since they had a problem combing or dividing two parts of a sentence which, in turn, can contribute to the production of fragments. In order to enhance the reliability of our results, each survey was provided to the students voluntarily without providing the names of the participants. The time that the students took to complete both surveys was one hour. Participants were allowed to use dictionaries, but they were not allowed to help each other in any way. In addition, we have used an L1 English participant as our control for the sake of comparing how having Arabic as a mother tongue could raise the possibility of producing sentence fragments. **Research Methodology**

In this research, we will test how often each type of fragments is produced by native Arabic speakers by using two different kinds of surveys.

In the first survey, we had 8 multiple choice questions where each question has an Arabic sentence along with three choices for translating the sentence into English. Within the choices provided, there is only one correct sentence that does not have any kind of fragments. A second task that our population study group had to do is to translate different Arabic sentences into English on their own. The main goal of our study is to examine the most common type of fragments that Arabic native speakers are more likely to produce, and to suggest some tips that can be used to avoid producing such fragments. In addition, we are interested in testing how having Arabic as a mother tongue can increase the chance of producing the four different types of fragments when transferring sentences from Arabic to English.

For study purposes, we have used a website called *Survey Monkey* to set out our survey and analyze the data collected. *Survey Monkey* is a website that provides free and customizable surveys. It also has different types of surveys and survey templates that can be adjusted according to the type of survey we want to build in. After conducting the survey, users can collect responses for the survey by inviting the public to be part of their survey. After that, users can analyze their results and obtain data trends of the responses. In our multiple choice survey, we had two sentences for each type of fragment and we used them to predict how likely native Arabic speakers are to produce sentences that have these types of fragments. Then, we collected the percentage of candidates who have produced Dependent-Word fragment, *Ing* and *to* fragments, Added-detail fragments and Missing-Subject fragments. The same study population was also used to analyze the data for our second survey which consists of 6 Arabic sentences, where the candidates were asked to translate them on their own. Students were given around one hour to complete both surveys in order to test how likely the students are to commit the 4 various types of fragments.

Afterwards, we used Microsoft Excel to analyze the data collected from both surveys as Survey Monkey provides visual data graphs for each question separately. Thus, we have entered the data collected into Microsoft Excel and we have inserted a bar chart to show the overall percentage of candidates who have produced each type of fragment in the multiple choice survey. As for the sentence-translation survey, we have collected the number of candidates producing each type of fragment separately and then took the average of candidates who have produced each type of fragment in case there are two sentences that have been set for the same type of fragment. The data collected were entered into Microsoft Excel and a pie graph was built to show the distribution of the data.

### **Analysis of the results**

The results of our study reveal that the most common type of sentence fragment produced is missing subject-fragment. The multiple choice survey yields different results as compared with sentence–translation survey as the percentage of candidates producing both missing-subject fragment and *Ing&to* fragments were equal in the latter. The bar chart below shows the distribution of sentence fragments produced by the study population.

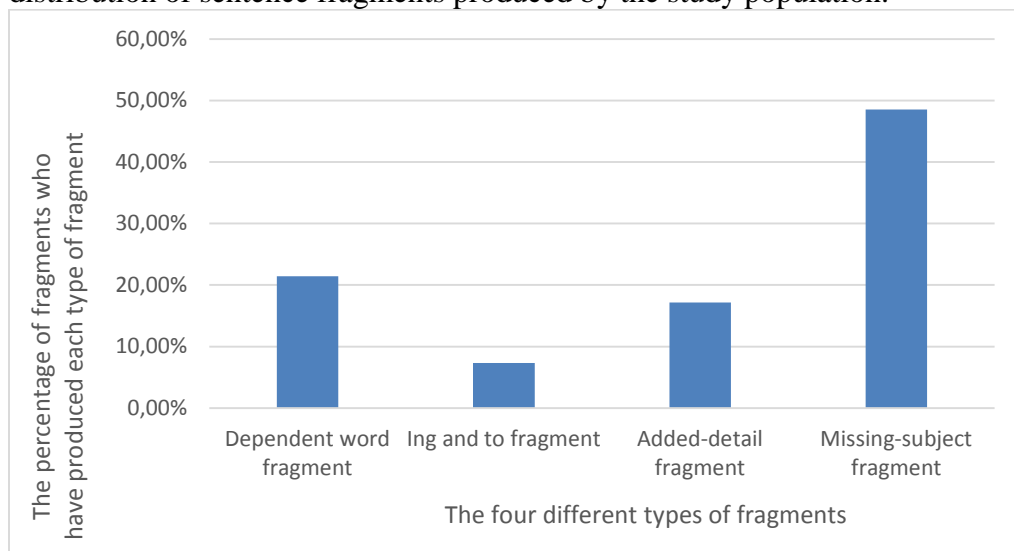


Figure 1: The percentage of sentence-fragment produced by our study population according to the multiple choice survey.

As it can be observed from the chart above, the most common type of sentence fragments produced by the candidates was missing-subject fragments, followed by dependent word fragments, added-detail fragments and then the *Ing&to* fragments. We will discuss the reasons behind producing each type of fragment and its relevance to the Arabic background of our study population.

The sentence-translation survey yielded quiet different results from the results obtained through our first survey. The pie graph below shows the distribution of sentence fragments as it has been produced by the same study group.



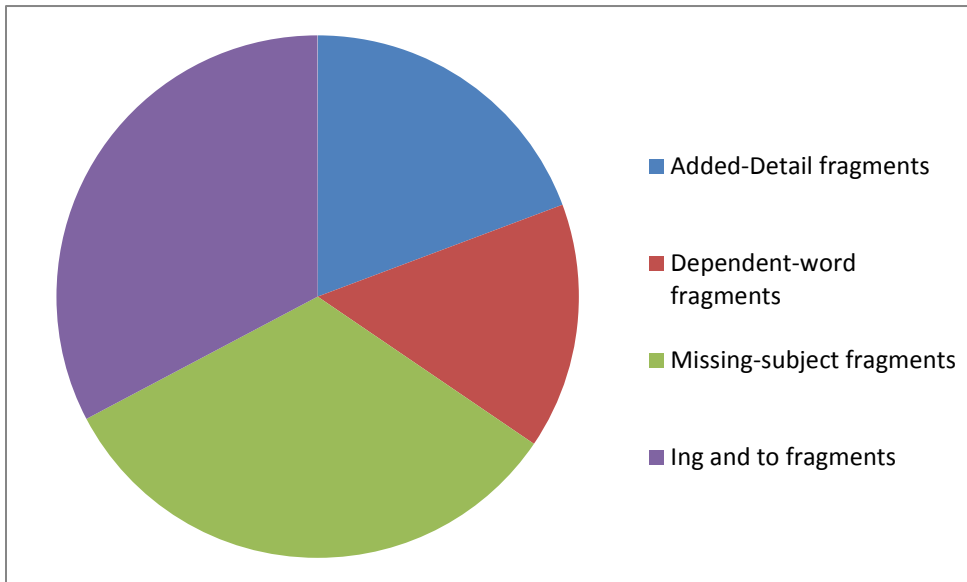


Figure 2: The distribution of sentence fragments according to our second survey (sentence transfer survey).

As it can be observed from the above pie graph, the distribution of missing-subject fragments and *ing&to* fragments is the same, followed by added-detail fragments and dependent-word fragments. In our next section, we will discuss the results obtained by both surveys and investigate the reasons that might have led to obtain these results.

### **Methodology**

In order to test for the impact of L1 Arabic on L2 English, two surveys were produced (see Appendix A & B) by using *Survey Monkey*. This website can be used to build free surveys and collect quantitative information about the writing samples obtained from the University of Jordan students. The survey took place on March, 2015 and all the responses from both surveys were obtained voluntarily and anonymously. In addition, one L1 English native speaker was included in our study as control sample in order to compare and contrast the responses with L1 Arabic participants. The collected responses were analyzed based on various factors including the tendency to produce the different types of fragments and the tendency of native Arabic speakers to employ over-exaggeration in the context of their writings.

### **Discussion**

The results of our study show that missing-subject fragments are the most common type of fragments produced by our study population group. Saad and Sawalmeh (2014) conducted a study to test for writing errors

produced by less proficient speakers of English. The authors classified linguistic errors into 7 categories. The results revealed by their study show that the major type of errors are related to subject-verb agreement, followed by sentence fragments which make up 8.3 % of the total number of their study group [Ibid].

Sentence fragment is part of a sentence that becomes disconnected from the main clause due to the lack of a subject or a verb. This type of fragment is produced due to negative L1 transfer. The influence of Arabic on the students’ writing skills indicate that language teachers need to take into account the negative impact of the students’ mother tongue by asking the students to identify these errors, analyze them and ask the students to correct these errors [Sawalmeh, 2013]. The flow chart below can be used to test for sentence fragments.

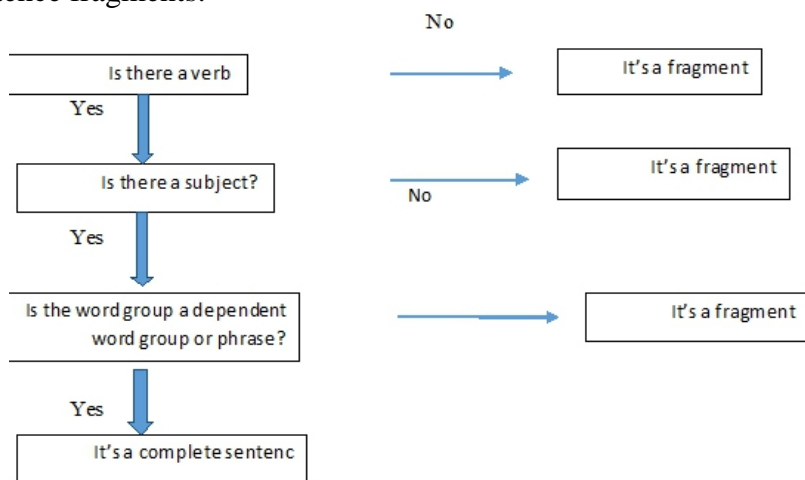


Figure 3: A flow chart to test for sentence completeness

In addition, native speakers of Arabic (L1) who write in English (L2) as a second language experience an impact of their mother tongue on the target language. Therefore, it is crucial to differentiate between purely linguistic errors and the cultural difference between Arabic and English in order to identify linguistic problems that are due to cultural background and try to avoid producing these errors [Barry. 2014]. Since most of the participants in our study were bilingual, it is expected that the number of fragments produced is not as much as the number of fragments that could have been produced if the participants were monolinguals. The results revealed by Cho et.al (2011) showed that the performance of bilingual students [English-Arabic] is superior to monolingual participants who speak only Arabic. According to Cho et.al (2011), this can refer to the concept of cross-linguistic literacy transfer between Arabic (L1) and English (L2) and

therefore enhancing the writing skills of bilingual speakers as compared to their monolingual speakers [Ibid].

As a result of better understanding of common linguistic cultural errors, English as a second language teachers will be better able to correct writing errors produced by native Arabic speakers. Furthermore teachers will be able to help students in preserving their culture and at the same time conserving the context of proper grammatical English. In addition, English as second language learners need to balance between proper writing English skills in English and preserve the unique Arabic voice within the context of their English writings [Barry.D, 2014].

Our first survey consists of 8 multiple choice questions which have been distributed according to the various types of fragments. As it can be seen from figure 1, missing-subject fragments make up approximately 48 % of fragments produced by our study population. The second major type of fragments produced is dependent-word fragments that make 21 % of fragments produced, followed by added-detail fragments which make around 17 % and last type of fragments produced by our study population is *-Ing & to* fragments which only make 7 % of the types of fragments produced. The reason behind having missing-subject fragments as the major type of fragments produced might be due to the student's focus on translating sentences and not paying attention to small but yet, crucial details. In addition, native Arabic speakers tend not to repeat the subject pronoun twice if the sentence is composed of two parts and usually, underestimate using it in the second part of the sentence as it commonly known that native Arabic speakers merge the two parts of the sentence and avoid using the repetition of the same subject twice.

Moreover, it is very common for the subject in Arabic sentences to be a hidden one, which is known in Arabic as (*Al-Dameer Al-Mustater*), Example:

8. ðahab-a ʕali-un birifqat-i zumalaʔi-hi lil-maktabat-i wa-  
ʕtara madʕmuʕat-an min-al dafatir-i wa-l ʔqlam-i

Ali went with his friends to the bookshop, and bought a bunch of pens and notebooks.

In the second part that starts from and bought, the subject is not repeated since it is known in Arabic as the hidden subject. Since the students are influenced by their mother tongue, they do not repeat the subject in English as well, resulting in a missing subject fragment."

Furthermore, the under use of dependent words is common by native Arabic speakers and thus that explains why dependent-word fragments make the second largest type of fragments. An example is:

9. rasab-a ʕali-un fi kul-il mawad-di wa tarak-al madrasata  
nihaʔiyy-an.

Ali failed all the courses and he quitted school.

In English, a dependent-word is supposed to be used in the former sentence:

Ali failed all the courses so he quitted school.

Within the context of dependent-word fragments, writers often make the dependent clause stands on its own instead of attaching it to a complex sentence in order to express a complete thought. To correct dependent-word fragments, we can attach the fragment to the sentence that comes before the fragment or to the sentence that comes after the fragment as in:

10.a After I finish high school [Incomplete sentence]

b. After I finish high school, I will study dentistry [complete sentence]

The third type of fragments produced by our study group as it has been revealed by our multiple-choice survey is added-detail fragments. As native Arabic speakers usually tend to go in circular discussions and add unnecessary details, thus the concept of “absence of metalingual organizers” is greatly noticed in their speech which is transformed negatively into their writing context as well (Fakhri, 1994). Added-detail fragment is produced when a sentence is going into further discussion after the period and this can lead to the addition of extra details that should not be implemented within the context of the sentence as these details are not necessary in presenting a complete thought. Therefore, sentence-subject fragment can be corrected by adding the fragment to the sentence that comes before it or, by attaching a subject and a verb to the fragment itself to express a complete thought. An example is:

11.a The essay that Mohammed wrote won a prize because was very well organized [Fragment]

b. The essay the that Mohammed wrote won a prize because it was very well organized [Revised]

The fourth type of fragments produced by our study group according to our first survey is *-ing* & *to* fragments. This has also been a common concern not only to native Arabic speakers but, also to most of English second learners. This type of fragment is frequently produced by ESL learners as there are certain words that are followed by the infinitive form of the verb with *to* whereas there are other words that are followed by an *ing* form of the verb (gerund). In addition, there are also some words that can be followed by either the infinitive form of the verb or by, the *ing* form of the verb and thus make it even harder for non-native English speakers to differentiate between the two forms when implementing that into their writing production. However, that problem cannot be only limited to native-Arabic speakers but can also be generalized to the majority of ESL learners. This indicates that such error is not referred to L1 interference.

Our second survey, sentence-translating survey, consists of 6 Arabic sentences and the students were asked voluntarily to translate these sentences into Arabic. The results revealed by our second show quite different results from those obtained by the first survey. The percentage of candidates producing both missing-subject fragments and *ing* & *to* fragments is the same. These results seem to contradict with the results obtained by our multiple-choice survey where *ing* & *to* fragments make the lowest percentage of fragments produced. That contradiction in the results can be referred to the structure of the two surveys, where in the sentence-translating survey the students needed to put more effort in translating the sentences. On the other hand, in our multiple-choice survey, the students had the time to focus more on the grammatical structure of the sentences rather than putting more effort in translating complex words. In addition, non-native speakers of English tend to recognize the correct form of the verb when both of the *ing* and the infinitive form of the verb are presented side by side to each other, rather than building a new sentence where they have to make the choice of which form of the verb need to be implemented within the overall structure of the sentence. However, both of our surveys show that missing-subject fragments are the most common type of fragments produced by native Arabic speakers. Therefore, the results show that most of students' errors are due to the great reliance of students on their mother tongue in expressing ideas. As most of native Arabic speakers negatively count on their native language "Arabic" to translate certain sentences into the target language "English", that may result in the production of sentence fragments. Since the first language has a great impact on the learning process of a foreign language, learners have a great deal of experience that is used in communication and which they employ in their writings as a result of employing their mother tongue in the context of their writing. As a result, there has been a great emphasis on using L2 in English classrooms to avoid producing such fragments and to reduce the reliance of L2 learners on their mother tongue and hence, improving their language skills in general. In our research we allowed our study group to utilize electronic dictionaries when they were asked voluntarily to participate in our survey. That is due to the fact that foreign language learners or non-native L2 speakers may experience at some point an increased difficulty in memorizing particular words to employ them within the overall context of their sentence structure. In addition, L2 learners may face some problems restoring some grammatical structures that might have been previously mastered. Despite the fact that the participants of our study were students from the English and literature department, these conditions have been faced by our study population due to the fact that their language skill has become out of practice and thus weakening their L2 language skills.

Although, other English writing problems such as word order, exaggeration and preposition used to be a major concern in the past, these problems did not appear to contribute negatively on the sentence-transfer produced by our study population as a result of cross-linguistic transfer. However, the major types of writing problems produced by our study population were mainly due to punctuation and conjunctions. Therefore, in order for native-Arabic speakers to produce effective translated sentences and avoiding producing fragments, they should reduce their great reliance on their mother tongue when transferring sentences and avoid the use of cross-linguistic transfer. Secondly, native-Arabic speakers can enhance their language skills if they practice these skills on regular basis in order to keep up the acquired L2 skills. In addition, language teachers can help students to overcome the negative impact of L1 transfer by asking them to highlight these writing errors and ask them to correct their own writing mistakes.

It is worth mentioning that our L1 English participant did not commit mistakes in the multiple choice survey and gave an accurate translation for the sentences in our second survey. This implies that having Arabic as a mother tongue has led to producing fragments.

### **Recommendations**

In order to enhance the language skills of foreign language learners, language teachers need to aware of linguistic errors that are due to cultural interference and purely linguistic errors in order to help their students manage producing sentence-fragments. As it has been revealed by our study, there is a strong evidence that the influence of acquiring a foreign language is greatly related to the level of L2 knowledge that L1 speakers have.

For instance, the percentage of fragments produced would be much higher if our study population were monolinguals and thus, we expect that the level of English that bilingual students have would enhance their writing skills positively. Furthermore, despite the linguistic differences between English and Arabic, our study population managed to positively transfer Arabic sentences into English despite the percentage of sentence- fragments that they have produced. Therefore, it can be concluded that having Arabic as a mother tongue may increase the chance of producing fragments as native Arabic speakers usually avoid the repetition of the subject. They underestimate the use of dependent words and are more likely to add unnecessary details to the sentence after the period. In addition, there are various cultural differences between English and Arabic which may contribute to the production of negative transfer. However, the ability to overcome the native language's information is greatly affected by the level of L2 knowledge that L1 speakers have [Al-dohen 2014].

## **Conclusion**

The results obtained by conducting two different surveys revealed that missing-subject fragments are the most common type of fragments produced by our study population. There has been a contradiction between the results obtained by each survey in regards to the second common type of fragments produced by our study population. The multiple-choice survey shows that the frequency of *ing & to* fragments was the lowest whereas, the sentence-translating survey show that *ing & to* fragments was the second highest type of fragments produced after the missing-subject fragments. However, despite all of that contradiction, we can conclude that most of writing errors committed by native Arabic speakers are due to the negative L1 transfer and the difference of the results obtained may be due to the difference in structure between our two surveys.

## **Limitations of our current study**

The results obtained by our study are like any other studies that have a number of limitations. The results obtained by our study cannot be generalized to all native Arabic speakers due to several reasons. First of all, the participants of our study were students enrolled at the University of Jordan and thus, we cannot generalize the results obtained to all university students who have Arabic as their mother tongue. Second, the numbers of students who were involved in our study were relatively small (35 participants) and thus, we could have obtained more accurate results if the number of our study population was bigger. Therefore, for future research we suggest that a larger sample of participants need to be involved in the study and to have participants from the public or different universities to be part of the survey in order to obtain more generalized results. Furthermore, we cannot generalize our results to all native Arabic speaker as most of the participants in our study were bilingual and had a good level in English since their major was English language and literature and thus, they were aware of common English language mistakes produced by non-native speakers. In addition, it would be interesting to compare the types of sentence-fragments produced by native Arabic speakers and other languages' speakers.

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## Appendix A

- 1) العديد من الناس لم تصوت في الانتخابات لاعتقادهم ان كل المرشحين غير مؤهلين
- Large number of people didn't vote in the election. Because many people thought that all of the candidates were not qualified
  - Large number of people didn't vote in the election because many people thought that all of the candidates were not qualified
  - Large number of people didn't vote in the election. The reason is many people though that all the candidates were not qualified.



- 2) هو يعمل ثماني ساعات في اليوم ثم يذهب إلى الحصة الصفية لمدة ثلاث ساعات
  - He works eight hours a day. Then he goes to class for three hours
  - He works eight hours a day. Then going to class for three hours.
  - He working eight hours a day. Then going to class for three hours
- 3) في محاولة للوصول إلى المطار في الوقت المحدد, غادرنا المنزل في الساعة الرابعة من صباح اليوم
  - In an effort to get to the airport on time. We left the house at four o'clock in the morning
  - In an effort to get to the airport, on time we left the house at four o'clock in the morning
  - In an effort to get to the airport on time, we left the house at four o'clock in the morning
- 4) يوجد خصم على جميع الأجهزة الالكترونية في المحل باستثناء ألعاب الفيديو
  - All electronic devices in the store are on sale, except video games
  - All electronic devices are on sale. Except video games
  - All software, are on sale except video games
- 5) حصتنا الصفية تبدأ عادة في وقت متأخر. على سبيل المثال, بدأت أمس في الساعة السادسة والرابع
  - Our class usually starts late. For example yesterday at quarter past six
  - Our class usually starts late. For example, yesterday it started at quarter past six instead of at six o'clock
  - Our class usually starts late. For example yesterday, started at quarter past six instead of six o'clock
- 6) من بين الدورات الأساسية المطلوبة للتخرج هي اللغة الانجليزية, الرياضيات و العلوم العامة
  - Several basic courses are required for graduation. Among them English, math and general science course
  - Among several courses required for graduation are English, Math and general science course
  - Among the basic courses required for graduation are English, Math and general science course
- 7) ان الأستاذ ممتع ومطلع و لكنه يعطي مهام شاقة ولا يكافئها في اغلب الأحيان
  - The professor is interesting and very well-informed. However, he gives demanding assignments and rarely awards them.
  - The professor is interesting and very well-informed. But gives demanding assignments and rarely awards them.
  - The professor is interesting and very well-informed because gives demanding assignments and rarely awardsthem.
- 8) في طريقه إلى العمل, اخذ احمد طريق مختصرا لتجنب إشارات المرور و الوصول إلى المكتب بصورة أسرع
  - On his way to work, Ahmed took a shortcut. which he thought would enable him to avoid traffic lights and get him to the office faster
  - On his way to work, Ahmed took a shortcut to avoid traffic lights and get him to the office faster
  - Ahmed took a shortcut on his way to work to avoid traffic lights and to get to the office faster

## Appendix B

Translate the following sentences from Arabic to English (Hint: pay attention when using the punctuation marks)

1) نحن نعمل بحثاً على الانترنت كلما خططنا لشراء أشياء جديدة

.....

2) بينما يعمل بعض الطلاب بجد, لا يبذل آخرون جهداً في الدراسة

.....

3) هي تدرس ٤ ساعات يومياً ثم تذهب إلى النادي الرياضي لمدة ساعتين

.....

4) نجح جميع الطلاب في مادة العلوم باستثناء ريم

.....

5) مدير الشركة مثقف ولديه خبرة جيدة ولكنه دائماً يعطي الموظفين مشاريع صعبة ولا يكافئهم

.....

6) من بين المواد المطلوبة للتخرج من قسم العلوم هي الكيمياء والأحياء

.....