

Avoidance and Selectivity in the Acquisition of Arabic as a Second/Foreign Language

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Abstract : This paper explores and classifies the different kinds of avoidances that students commonly make in the acquisition of Arabic as a second/foreign language, and suggests specific strategies to help students lessen their avoidance trends in hopes of streamlining the learning process. Students most commonly use avoidance strategies in grammar, and word choice. These different types of strategies have different implications and naturally require different approaches. Thus the question remains as to the most effective way to help students improve their Arabic, and how teachers can efficiently utilize these techniques. It is hoped that this research will contribute to understand the role of avoidance in the field of the second language acquisition in general, and as a type of input. Yet some researchers also note that similarity between L1 and L2 may be problematic as well since the learner may doubt that such similarity indeed exists and consequently avoid the identical constructions or elements (Jordens, 1977; Kellermann, 1977, 1978, 1986). In an effort to resolve this issue, a case study is being conducted. The present case study attempts to provide a broader analysis of what is acquired than is usually the case, analyzing the learners' accomplishments in terms of three-part framework of the components of communicative competence suggested by Michele Canale: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence and discourse competence. The subjects of this study are 15 students' 22th year who came to study Arabic at Qatar University of Cairo. The 15 students are in the advanced level. They were complete intermediate level in Arabic when they arrive in Qatar for the first time. The study used discourse analytic method to examine how the first language affects students' production and output in the second language, and how and when students use avoidance methods in their learning. The study will be conducted through Fall 2015 through analyzing audio recordings that are recorded throughout the entire semester. The recordings will be around 30 clips. The students are using supplementary listening and speaking materials. The group will be tested at the end of the term to assess any measurable difference between the techniques. Questionnaires will be administered to teachers and students before and after the semester to assess any change in attitude toward avoidance and selectivity methods. Responses to these questionnaires are analyzed and discussed to assess the relative merits of the aforementioned strategies to avoidance and selectivity to further support on. Implications and recommendations for teacher training are proposed.

Keywords : the second language acquisition, learning languages, selectivity, avoidance

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