"OUR CERTIFICATES ARE BAPTIZED":
LEXICAL MISMATCHING IN ARAB STUDENTS' EFL WRITING

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Abstract:

This paper presents a lexical problem traced in the interlanguage of Arab EFL learners. The analysis of the research data shows how Arabic speaking learners of English usually confuse the selection of appropriate English words in certain contexts. Under the pressure of the first language which is intensified by the learners' frequent reference to English-Arabic bilingual dictionaries to identify the meanings of new vocabulary, it is noticed that the subjects under investigation incorrectly read the Arabic meanings of the English words; subsequently they use them with incorrect connotations.

The data was collected from the writing assignments given to Arab university students in their first and second years majoring in English in Sanaa University, Yemen and King Khaled University, KSA. Errors found were catalogued, classified and analyzed. Five outstanding subcategories were identified in these observed lexical errors, based on their parts of speech, i.e., noun, verb, adjective, adverb and preposition mismatches. Each subcategory is exemplified with typical errors, which are further diagnosed briefly. The findings of the study indicate that lexical mismatching in EFL writing results from lexical deficiency, mother tongue interference and the wrong use of bilingual dictionaries.

The study recommends the need for revising both the processes of teaching and learning vocabulary.

Key Words: *Lexical Mismatches, Lexical Deficiency, Arabic Interference, Bilingual Dictionary, Monolingual dictionary*

INTRODUCTION

Lexical items constitute the basic component of language as communication is regarded. In other words, vocabulary is the means to express meanings and without them, grammar is just a meaningless abstract construct of rules (Dagut, 1977; Laufer, 1986,1990a; Meara, 1996) cited in Llach (2005, 2007).

Lexical errors constitute a part of the process of second language vocabulary acquisition. Such errors are inevitable. However, there is a strong evidence to believe that lexical errors and lack of lexical knowledge have a great influence on communication. They are accounted for as the most distracting and pernicious of all types of errors (Hughes and Lascaratou, 1982; Gass 1988; Ellis 1994). Unlike grammatical errors, vocabulary errors may result in totally incomprehensible compositions. This acquisition problem poses particular complexity to the EFL teachers, who have encountered errors as such frequently and struggled with the remedies.

A very significant aspect of the English produced by Arab learners of English as a foreign language is the inability to locate appropriate lexical items in their writing. There often arise lexical errors that may seriously undermine the effectiveness of the intended connotation and hence of the writing as a whole.

Brief review of related literature

Interlanguage studies in the literature of Arab students' EFL writing are mostly concerned with the syntactic, morphological, or phonological aspects. Studies at the lexical level are comparatively fewer and less comprehensive. Nevertheless, some studies have dealt with the classification of lexical errors in general and collocation problems in particular. Word choice, correctness and appropriateness of the lexical selections made by Arab EFL learners have received little attention.

Elkhatib (1984) classifies the lexical problems found in samples of four Arab college freshmen students of English as a second language and determines the causes of the problems, and examines the students' choice of certain lexical items in an attempt to determine whether the students were more attuned to the form or the substance of the language. Eight types of lexical errors were found: overgeneralization of the use of one translation equivalent, literal translation, divergence, confusion of words formally or phonetically similar, confusion of related or unrelated words with similar meanings, unfamiliarity with word collocation, overuse of a few general lexical items, and nonce errors (those that seem to defy analysis). Based on the findings, his study suggestions are offered for teaching lexical non-congruence with the help of semantic field theory and componential analysis, teaching the process of describing meaning, and teaching collocations. Zughoul, and Hussein (2001) point out that Arab learners of English, even at advanced levels, still have problems with English collocations and idioms. The study subscribes to the role of native language in foreign language acquisition and suggests that native language transfer is a creative cognitive process. In another study, Zughoul and Hussein (2003) confirm that Arab learners of English at all levels face difficulty with English collocations. The findings of their study have substantiated the role of the native language in foreign language production as well as the need for explicit instructional focus on collocation in school and university. Mahmoud (2005) argues that Systematic and in-depth analyses of EFL learners' lexical errors in general and of collocation errors in particular are relatively rare. His study presents empirical data verifying the informal observations and theoretic assertions that EFL learners produce 'unnatural' word combinations. These findings of his study suggest the necessity of direct teaching of collocations, inclusion of bilingual glossaries in the EFL course books, and designing bilingual collocation dictionaries. Llach (2007) examines the relationship between the frequency of lexical errors and the proficiency level of language learners. This study supports the idea that lexical errors are found to be a measure of language proficiency and can this be used as objective criteria to determine linguistic competence and quality of language production.

Many studies have referred to the impact of the type of dictionaries used by learners on their vocabulary acquisitions, proficiency and use/misuse. East (2006) states that there is an increase in lexical sophistication in writing when the dictionary is used. The study further recommends effective training of learners on dictionary use. Hayati and Fattahzadeh (2006) argues that scientific investigation of learning the foreign language vocabulary, the building blocks of communication, has been largely neglected in the favor of research in other areas of language acquisition. The researcher argues that bilingual and monolingual dictionaries have an effect on vocabulary recall and retention but bilingual dictionaries against monolingual lead to a high reading speed. Dictionaries can serve as a means for checking the correctness of the guesses made, implanting the correct meanings in the learners' memories, and consequently fostering the process of vocabulary learning. Hsien- jen (2001) investigates the effect of dictionary use on the learner to understand new vocabulary items in reading tests. The findings show that even when the intermediate language learners have access to a monolingual dictionary, they do not use it as frequently as they do with a bilingual dictionary because of their insufficient language proficiency. The intermediate language learners do not have confidence in understanding the definition presented in the monolingual dictionary while

they believe that a bilingual dictionary can provide them with a direct and instant translation from L2 to L1.

Gu (2003) reviews empirical research on vocabulary learning strategies in a second/foreign language. The findings of the study emphasize the fact that a full-fledged, interrelated, functional, and dynamic L2 vocabulary is developed, gradually, and grows by itself, if the learner makes use of strategies that aim for the use, rather than retention, of words. Therefore, what we need is a developmental model which moves us beyond strategies for the initial handling of vocabulary and gives more emphasis to the really hard work of vocabulary acquisition.

The present study focuses on the semantic deviation or lexical mismatching that appears in the composition of the Arabic speaking learners of English and attributes this kind of mismatching mainly to the inadequate vocabulary knowledge as well as the inadequate learning strategies, particularly the inefficient use of English-Arabic and Arabic-English dictionaries. This study draws on and confirms Tang's (2006) findings in the case of Chinese EFL students and renders the problem of lexical mismatching as a general phenomenon observed in the performance of EFL students.

Data Collection
The data was collected from the writing assignments given to eighty five male university students in their first and second years majoring in English in Sanaa University, Yemen and King Khaled University, KSA. The topics of writing assignments varied and ranged from personal to general. Data collection took one academic year in each university as the author taught writing courses in both universities. The errors found were identified, catalogued, classified and analyzed.

The objectives of the study are to
(i) identify from the written English of the subjects the wrongly-used lexical items; and,

(ii) account for the possible sources of deviations and suggest solutions to remedy them.

Data analysis and Discussion:
Five outstanding subcategories were identified in these observed lexical errors, based on their parts of speech, i.e., noun, verb, adjective, adverb and preposition mismatches. Each subcategory is exemplified with typical errors and possible diagnosis and interpretations are given.

Noun Mismatches
The following list of sentences is taken from the students writing samples. Each sentence contains one mismatching error typed in bold.

1. We will remain **debtors** to our teachers.
2. I am too glad to deliver this **word.**
3. He left his country with a view to **learning** us information and knowledge.
4. I'm sorry I can't come tomorrow. I have **a promise** in the hospital.
5. I received the receipt and went to the **automatic center**.
6. He learned at school and acquired some bad **adjectives.**
7. First I went to the **recorder** and told him my name.
8. I paid the annual fees to the **box.** (the person who collects fees)
9. We can say that we are not in **richness** of the computer machine.
10. First, I must go to the college and give my **qualifications** to the chairman.
11. I graduated from Al-Falah school but I had a little **total**.
12. In Yemen we use computer in limited **deeds**.
13. I would only suggest that if the Yemeni people should change the government and begin **a new paper** in this country.
14. The **shell** of fate.
15. Personal **printer**
16. How many **clocks** between Abha and Jeddah?
17. I saw **a pound** in the dark.

18. A scientifically **controlled** journal

The chart below presents the wrong lexical selections by the students and what they intended to say. The Arabic translation of the intended words is given to show what equivalents the students have in their minds which trigger the deviant English choices.

The wrong word/phrase Choice	The intended word/phrase
Debtors	obliged (مدين)
Word.	speech (كلمة)
Learning us	teaching us (يعلم)
A promise in the hospital	an appointment(موعد)
Automatic center	computer section(قسم الحاسب)
Bad adjectives	bad qualities (مواصفات سيئة)
The recorder	the registrar (مسجل)
Paid to the box	paid to the treasurer (دفع للصندوق)
Not in richness of computer	computer is indispensable (في غنى)
Respects	specializations/subjects (تخصص)
My qualifications	my certificates (مؤهلي)
A little total	low percentage (مجموع قليل)
Limited deeds	limited uses (أعمال محدودة)
Begin a new paper	make a fresh start (يبدأ صفحة جديدة)
The shell of fate	coincidence(صدفة الأقدار)
Personal printer	character (الطابع الشخصي)
Scientifically controlled journal	refereed journal (مجلة علمية محكمة)
Clocks	hours (ساعة)
Pound	fairy (jinn)(جنيه)

Judging from the context, the words in bold above demonstrate a striking deviance from the idiomatic usages. It is obvious that these nouns are direct translations from their Arabic counterparts, nevertheless, within the given contexts, the chosen items are not denoting the intended notions.

Take sentence 1. The student had obviously intended to say "We will remain obliged to our teachers." What complicated the lexical selection process is that the Arabic noun "*madeen*" formally has different English equivalents (debtor is one of them and 'obliged' is another) among which the student needed to make a choice. The student chose the word "debtor", which connotes a situation in which a person owes money, thus fails to serve semantically plausible in the context.

Similarly, the misuse of the word "word" in example 2 above was directly influenced by the Arabic word "*kalimah*" which has the English word "speech" as one of its equivalents. Here, the student transferred the literal meaning of the word "word" from Arabic and added to it a new meaning which may not exist within the semantic range of the word "word" in English. The word "*Kalimah*" in Arabic can be used for (a word, a speech), but in English it is not used for "speech" and because the students usually use English-Arabic or Arabic-English

dictionaries very frequently, they are not aware of the correct usage of the word "word" in English and its different meanings. They falsely presume semantic equivalence between the two languages.

The third sentence in the students' data demonstrates a very common error among Arabic speaking learners of English in the use of the verb "learn" and hence the gerund "learning" which are usually confused with the words "teach" and "teaching". Sentence 3 above says: *He (Our teacher) left his country with a view to **learning** us information and knowledge.* Similar examples which can fall within "verb category" are:

- Computer would **learn** them how to enjoy their life.
- I would advise teachers to **learn** their students the purpose of computer.
- My friend **learns** me many things to face life difficulties.
- My uncle **learns** me how to be successful man in the future.

The students mix up the two words "learn" and "teach" and use them confusingly interchangeably. The source behind this confusion could be that the distinction between the two terms in Arabic is not clear in the students' mind. This confusion is transferred to their English. The second interpretation could be the use of a bilingual dictionary by learners which shows only the equivalence of words in Arabic without elaborating on their usage like 'Oxford Wordpower English-English-Arabic dictionary'. The remaining examples demonstrate the same phenomenon of wrongly extending the semantic range of English words as a result of the heavy influence from the student's mother tongue on their L2 production and the faulty learning strategy of depending solely on a bilingual dictionary. The use of "promise" for "appointment", "automatic center" for "computer section", "bad adjectives" instead of "bad qualities", "recorder" instead of "registrar", etc. (look at the list above) are very remarkably illustrative examples.

Verb Mismatches
1. I **saved** Qur'an when I was in high school.
2. I want to **preach** you to my home today.
3. The government has to **survey** all the old shops.
4. I asked my father to help me but he didn't **define** anything about this subject. (English).
5. My uncle **learns** me how to be a successful man in the future.
6. Policemen have to **struggle** the criminals.
7. My dad had a hard time to **collect** between his work and my study.
8. King Abdullah goes to **repairing** problems in countries.
9. The government clearly has the responsibility to **provide** the economy and provide poor people to get better life.
10. If Yemeni people take my advice, they will start looking for president, ministers and officials who will **provide** the economic situation.
11. It would appear to me that our best course would be to **strive** the administrative corruption.
12. Yesterday the revolution happened and the blood was **souped**.
13. They **annoyed** the road.
14. In my opinion, the government should encourage using computer and **decide** it as a subject in schools.
15. When you **add** some money, you can buy a new computer.
16. The judge in the court **controlled** fairly between the people.
17. I didn't **remember** writing 3 of 2007, I **remembered** writing 3 of last year.
18. Please teachers, **apologize me** for my deficiency.
19. The certificates in our institute are **baptized**.
20. He loves to **shine** his shoes every day.

The wrong word/phrase Choice	The intended word/phrase
Saved	learned by heart(حفظت)
Preach	invite(أدعوك)
Survey	remove(يمسح)
Define	know (يعرف)
Learns	teaches (يعلم)
Struggle	fight (يكافح/يحارب)
Collect	adjust (his time) (يجمع بين)
Repair problems	solve problems (يصلح الخلافات)
Provide	support (يدعم)
Strive corruption	fight (يكافح/يحارب)
Blood souped	blood shed (أريق الدم)
Decide a subject	prescribe a subject (يقرر مادة)
Annoy the road	narrow the road (يضيق الطريق)
Add some money	save/collect money (يجمع المال)
Judge controlled fairly	judge ruled fairly (حكم القاضي بالعدل)
I didn't remember	I didn't study for exams (يذاكر)
Apologize me	excuse me (أعذروني)
Baptized	accredited/recognized (معتمد)
Shine	polish (يلمع)

Looking into the Arabic translations in front of each English pair in the chart above, it is noticed that many of them are homonyms or homographs. The words   like " يحفظ،يكافح،يضيق، يعتمد " are homonymous Arabic vocabulary, i.e., each word has more than one meaning. The Arabic word "يحفظ",   for example, can mean 'save' or 'learn by heart' in English. While looking for the equivalent of this word in English, the students focus on the form without checking its meaning, and , hence, they wrongly select the proper equivalent. It can be seen that the students were not aware of the intrinsic distinctions between the semantic properties and usages of "save" and "learn by heart", "preach" and "invite", "survey" and "remove", etc. It is also expected that the students during the process of acquiring vocabulary use an Arabic-English dictionary which they think facilitates the task of finding English words while doing composition assignments at home. For example, a student writing about the topic "Crime" wants to use the word "fight". After consulting the Arabic-English dictionary with the word "*yukafeh*" in mind, he/she finds that this vocabulary has more than one English equivalent like "strive, struggle, fight" which are usually decontextualised in the dictionary. The language learner picks up any of the options bearing in mind that all are synonyms and any one can meet the need.

Adjective Mismatches:
1. I feel bad sometimes because the time is **tall.**
2. I ask Allah to grant my friend **tall** living.
3. Instead of waiting for the president or any other **political** to look at the moving condition, we have to do something.

4. My arteries are **distressed**.
5. I graduated from Al-Falah school but I had **a little** total.
6. People were happies.

The wrong word/phrase Choice	The intended word/phrase
Time is tall	time is long (طويل)
Tall living	long life (طويل)
Political	politician (سياسي)
Distressed	narrowed (ضاقت)
A little total	low percentage (مجموع منخفض)
Happies	happy (سعداء)

When it comes to the selection of adjectives, errors similar to the ones discussed above occur. In a given context, the uses of potential adjectives are supposed to be semantically coherent with the qualities or properties of something described, whereas the students here did not pay adequate attention to this restriction. For instance, the choice of the adjective "tall" in the phrases "tall time, tall living" was obviously mismatched with the Arabic adjective phrase "*waqt taweel*", and "*hayah taweelah*". The word "long" should be used instead of "tall" in the two examples. However, the students seem to fail to distinguish between the meanings of "tall" which in English is used to describe the height of something or someone and "long" which in English is used to measure length from one end to another, distance from one place to another, or amount of time. The students may think that both "long" and "tall" can be used interchangeably with no difference in meaning and usage. The reason behind this error could be the influence from Arabic in which the word "*taweel*" is used to express the two concepts of "long" and "tall" as in the phrases *tareeq* **taweel** "long road" and *mabna* **taweel** "tall building". The word "tall" is overgeneralized here and not "long" perhaps because it is phonetically closer to Arabic "taweel" and consequently acquired earlier than "long".

In example 3, *Instead of waiting for the president or any other* **political** *to look at the moving condition, ...* the word "political" is wrongly used. The learner intended to use the word "politician". However, it seems the word is not yet in the learner's lexical repertoire. While searching for this word to use in the required context, he/she found that the English-Arabic or Arabic- English dictionary says the word "*siaasi*" in Arabic is equivalent to "political" in English. It is true. However, the words 'political" and "politician" are two different English words. The word "political" is an adjective and the word "politician" is a noun and Arabic has one word for both, i.e., "*siaasi*" which is a homonymous word. The language learner mismatches "*siaasi*" and "political". Thus a wrong sentence emerges due to this wrong lexical matching. The wrong use of a bilingual dictionary is the reason behind such kind of errors.

Examples 4 and 5 demonstrate the errors which result from the mother tongue interference and caused by wrong vocabulary learning strategies as well. The word "distressed" means "upset" and interestingly used to describe "narrowed arteries" because both "distressed" and "narrowed" can have the word "*yadheeq*" as their Arabic equivalent. In example 5, the word "little" is a wrong choice and it results from the frequent use of the phrase "*majmoo' qaleel*"' as used in local varieties of Arabic. Sentence 6 shows a problem of concord between the noun "people" and the adjective "happies". English shows no concord between the adjective and the noun it modifies. However in Arabic grammar this phenomenon exists. That is why the student says "people were happies" which is a direct translation of "*kana annasu suaadaa*"'.

Preposition/Adverb mismatches:

1. The government would inter the computer to universities and schools **even** every student learns easily.
2. Anyone who doesn't learn computer **until** if he had any certificate is not a learner.

3. It's sad that many families haven't got **until** wheat.
4. In my opinion, people should be sincere starting from the president **until** the small person.
5. On Friday, I always do many things **even** Al-Maghreb prayer.
6. We walked up **even** the mountain top and looked down.
7. **Until** friends forgot their friends, and the mothers forgot their children and the lovers forgot their love, be sure that I will not forget you forever.

The wrong word/phrase Choice	**The intended word/phrase**
Even every student learns	so that (حتى يتعلم كل الطلاب)
Until if he had any certificate	even if(حتى ولو كان معه أي شهادة)
Haven't got until wheat	even (ليس لديهم حتى القمح)
from the president until the small person	to (حتى أصغر شخص)
even Al_maghreb prayer	until(حتى صلاة المغرب)
walked up even the mountain top	to the mountain top (حتى قمة الجبل)
Until friends forgot their friends	Even if friends forgot (حتى ولو)

The examples above show that our students at this level of proficiency cognitively do two things while writing their composition assignments or doing writing tasks. First of all, they think in Arabic of what they want to say in English. Then they literally translate what they thought of to English. The result is normally the deviant structures above. During the process of literal translation the students confuse the choice of some lexical elements because they lack the knowledge of how they are properly used. As the sentences above demonstrate, the students randomly use "even" and "until" because they think they suit each context in which the Arabic word "*hatta*" is required. This random use is caused by the bilingual dictionary they use which tells them that "even" means "*hatta*" and "until" means "*hatta*" as well. So whenever the Arabic "*hatta*" is needed, the English words "even" or "until" are the proper equivalents which is not always the case.

In the next page three entries are copied from Oxford Wordpower English –English- Arabic dictionary which is commonly used by Arab students majoring in English. Notice how the two words 'even' and 'until' are explained in English. After the explanation with the examples, the Arabic meaning حتى is used with both words with no discrimination or further details. The students usually glance the Arabic meaning and assume, in this case, that both English words are synonyms and can be used in identical contexts. The same thing appears to happen with the word 'baptize'. The Arabic dictionary meaning given is يعمد whose Christian cultural connotation is not known to the students. The students, particularly, the Yemenis, know that this Arabic word is used in the context of accrediting certificates or sealing them. Hence they commit the lexical error mentioned in the title of this paper.

ntie /ʌn'taɪ/ *verb* [T] *(pres part untying; 3rd sing pres unties; pt, pp untied)* to undo a ... free sb by undoing a rope, etc: *I can't get this* ... *untied.*

until /ʌn'tɪl/ *(also till* /tɪl/*) conj* up to the ... when: *She waited until he had finished.* ... *men work until they're 65.* ○ *We won't leave until the police get here* (= we won't leave before they come)

▸ **until** *(also till) prep* up to the time or the event mentioned: *The restaurant is open until mid-night.* ○ *Until that moment she had been happi...* ○ *We can't leave until 10 o'clock* (= we can leave at 10 but not before).

We can use *until* in both formal and informal English. *Till* is more common ... English and is not usually ... beginning of a sentence. Make ... only use *till/until* to talk abou... as far as to talk about di... as the shops. We use *up to* to talk about ... number: *You can take up to 20 kilos of lug...*

untold /ʌn'təʊld/ *adj* very great; so big, etc. that you cannot count it: *untold suffering* ○ *untold wealth*

untoward /ʌntə'wɔːd; *US* ʌn'tɔːrd/ *adj (formal)* (used about an event, etc.) unexpected and un-pleasant

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2 not changing; regular: *He's very even-...* - *in fact I've never seen him angry.*

3 (used about a competition, etc.) with o... being as good as the other: *The contest wa...* *even until the last few minutes of the game.*

❶ The opposite for senses 1,2,3 is uneven

4 (used about numbers) that can be divid... two: *4, 6, 8, 10, etc. are even numbers.* ... opposite is odd.

be/get even (with sb) to hurt or harm... who has hurt or harmed you

break even to make neither a loss nor... profit

▸ **evenly** *adv* in an even way: *The match...* *very evenly balanced.* ○ *Spread the cake m...* *evenly in the tin.*

even² /ˈiːvn/ *adv* 1 (used for emphasizing... that is surprising): *It isn't very warm here...* *in summer.* ○ *Even the children helped in the...* *den.* ○ *He didn't even open the letter* (= so he... *tainly didn't read it).* ○ *I have been so busy tha...* *haven't even had time to read the news...* ○ *I like her very much even though she can be ...* *annoying.* ➔ Look at the note at although.

2 (used when you are comparing thing... make the comparison stronger): *You know ...* *less about it than I do.* ○ *It is even more diffi...* *than I expected.* ○ *We are even busier th...* *yesterday.*

even if (used for saying that what follow... 'if' makes no difference): *I wouldn't do it, eve...* *you paid me a thousand pounds.*

even so (used for introducing a new idea...

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bangle → bar

when a person or an organization is bankrupt: *During this period of economic difficulty, bank-ruptcies are becoming more common.* ○ *Competi-tion from larger companies drove them to bankruptcy.*

'bank statement *(also statement) noun* [C] a printed list of all the money going into or out of a bank account during a certain period

banner /ˈbænə(r)/ *noun* [C] a long piece of cloth with words or signs on it, which can be hung up or carried through the streets on two poles: *The ... demonstrators carried banners saying 'Stop the War'.*

banquet /ˈbæŋkwɪt/ *noun* [C] a formal dinner for a large number of people, usually as a special event at which speeches are made

baptism /ˈbæptɪzəm/ *noun* [C,U] a ceremony in which a person becomes a member of the Chris-tian Church by being placed briefly under water or having drops of water put onto his/her head. Often he/she is also formally given a name. ➔ Look at christening.

▸ **baptize** *(also baptise)* /bæp'taɪz/ *verb* [T] to perform the ceremony of baptism: *Were you baptized as a child?* ○ *He was baptized 'George David'.*

Baptist /ˈbæptɪst/ *noun* [C], *adj* (a member) of a Protestant Church that believes that baptism should only be for people who are old enough to understand the meaning of the ceremony and should be done by placing the person fully under water

ɡbar¹ /bɑː(r)/ *noun* [C] 1 a place where you can buy and drink (especially alcoholic) drinks and sometimes have sth to eat: *They had a drink in ... before the meal.* ○ *a wine bar* ○ *a coffee*

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Error Sources

It is generally observed that when students encounter difficulties in expressing their notions in English, they would first formulate Arabic expressions and then try to locate their English equivalents. Deviant uses occur when the 'equivalents' chosen are semantically inadequate to convey their intended notions. In this process interference from the Arabic language functions and negatively interferes with the comprehension. Therefore, it can be said that lexical mismatching is a phenomenon, occurring at the translating stage of the writing process.

Arabic interference

According to the diagnosis mentioned above, the data reveals that students tended to resort to their mother tongue for literal translation at lexical level. Newmark (1988) proposes, "The SL (source language) grammatical constructions are converted to their nearest TL (target language) equivalents but the lexical words are again translated singly, out of context" . As this study indicates, the chosen lexical items often sound foreign to native speakers of English and may even result in misinterpretation or utter incomprehensibility.

Errors as such can be normally traced to Arabic words which are polysemous in meanings. A singular Arabic word (like يكافح) often comprises multiple meanings each having a different English equivalent 'struggle, fight, strive'. All these words mean "يكافح"; however, they don't have the same sense in English and, hence, are not used in the same context. Students think that since all the three words can have one Arabic equivalent, they can be used in exactly the same context with exactly the same sense. This wrong conception brings about lexical errors. Therefore, students have to be made aware that to convey one particular meaning, one lexical item has to be bound with one suitable sense. When the intended meaning is established, the sense of the chosen item must be compatible with the given context. Given that there can be more than one English equivalent for an Arabic word, the selection of an inappropriate equivalent may result in the occurrence of errors.

L2 Lexical Deficiency

How these inappropriate words were chosen instead of the proper ones may have two interpretations. The first is the insufficient lexical knowledge. In other words, the subjects are not aware of the existence of the proper items. Judging from the observed errors and the appropriate words, the subjects should have learned the latter 'appropriate words', but failed to match the correct sense with the word and the context. The second interpretation is that the student knew that 'preach' for example is one of the equivalents for يدعو and also knew that 'invite' is also another equivalent. Then the students might have taken them as synonyms and made the wrong choice.

Incorrect choices can also be explained with reference to how students retrieve their stored vocabulary. Among the words with shared lexical fields, students tend to automatically choose the most familiar ones. For instance, when the Arabic notion of 'مسجل' is formulated, the student would match it   with an English equivalent that is most readily available. The word 'recorder' might be the most familiar one to some students.

Extensive and Wrong Use of Bilingual Dictionaries

Studies regarding monolingual and bilingual dictionaries are very few in number and this paucity is astounding given the significant role of dictionaries in foreign language learning.

Until recently, the default stance taken by most experts and teachers is that a monolingual, rather than a bilingual dictionary should be encouraged (Hartmann, 1991). In fact, most of the published work on this topic is of the argumentative type.

Baxter (1980) described one common problem amongst EFL students: not being able to access a word in speech and lacking the ability to circumvent that word by providing a definition in the target language. He attributed this problem primarily to students' use of bilingual dictionaries and strongly advocated the use of monolingual dictionaries that would encourage "conversational definition" . In general, Baxter reiterated the basic concerns of most language teachers, that bilingual dictionaries 1) encourage translation; 2) foster one-to-one precise correspondence at word level between two languages; and 3) fail to describe adequately the syntactic behaviour of words.

By contrast, Thompson (1987) argued against monolingual dictionaries and supported the development of "a new generation of learners' bilingual dictionaries" . He pointed out that monolingual dictionaries tend to be circular in their definitions, e.g., laugh, amuse, amusement and humour are normally used in each other's definitions. Even if defining vocabulary is restricted, monolingual dictionaries still "employ a special register which is not necessarily the most useful or rewarding for learners to be exposed to" , and are therefore of little value to foreign language learners below the advanced level. Thompson did admit that objections to traditional bilingual dictionaries are valid, and he advocated the compilation of new bilingual dictionaries that, in addition to providing clearer understanding in the learners' L1, "avoid reinforcing the belief in a one-to-one relationship at word level" , and provide full semantic, grammatical, and stylistic information, examples, and usage notes that are not available in traditional bilingual dictionaries.

The present study supports the Baxter's and Thompson's views, discouraging the use of bilingual dictionaries, particularly the traditional ones. It can be inferred from the errors presented that students prefer Arabic explanations to English ones in the process of vocabulary learning. The questionnaire conducted to investigate the possible causes of lexical mismatches reveals that 88% of the students in the first year and second year use English-Arabic dictionaries and only 48% use English-English dictionaries. Moreover 80% of the students prefer English-Arabic dictionary to English-English dictionary to find out meanings of unfamiliar words. Intensive reference to English - Arabic dictionaries creates a lot of acquisition problems which cause lexical errors while producing English. Interestingly, it is found that some students read the Arabic equivalents wrongly. Therefore, they internalize wrong equivalents and produce funny utterances. For instance, in the following sentences, '*My arteries are **distressed**, the certificates in our institute are **baptized**, they **annoyed** the road, I saw **a pound** in the dark, the **shell** of fate'* it is inferred that when the students want to write something in English and they do not know some of the words to express some notions they resort to Arabic – English dictionaries and sometimes read the Arabic word wrongly as in the

case of " صدفة " *'sadafah'* which means 'shell' in English but is read as *'sudfah'* 'chance' and

used as such. Similarly, the word ' جنيه which means 'pound' is read as ' جنية " and wrongly used in a sentence like 'I saw a pound in the dark ' where the student does not mean the currency but fairy'. The data show many similar examples of such homographic errors caused by false reading of Arabic-English dictionaries. The same lexical errors can be caused by the wrong reading of Arabic equivalents in English – Arabic dictionaries. The table below presents the results of a questionnaire analysis which shows the habits of using dictionaries as a learning strategy for second language vocabulary acquisition. The answers are collected from the same students whose writing samples are used in this study.

Sn	Item	I do	Rarely	I don't
1	I use English-Arabic dictionary.	87%	0.02%	0.03%
2	I use Arabic – English dictionary.	48%	23%	24%
3	I use English – English dictionary.	44%	40%	0.07%
4	I prefer to use English-Arabic to English-English dictionary.	74%	16%	0.07%
5	I use the cell phone dictionary.	64%	.02%	24%
6	I use the dictionary to know the English meanings of words only.	52%	30%	15%
7	I read the different meanings of new words and how they are used in different contexts.	58.06%	30%	0.08%
8	I read examples that show how new words are used in contexts.	65%	28%	0.08%
9	In case a word has more than one meaning, I read the first meaning only.	48.03%	15%	28%
10	In writing assignments, I first write the text in Arabic; then translate it into English.	20.07%	11%	63%

Some irrelevant answers by respondents are neglected.

It can be inferred from the errors described above that students prefer Arabic explanations to English ones in the process of vocabulary acquisition. When memorizing the Arabic explanations, they tend to memorize those few that come first in the entries. Moreover, in the prevalent English-Arabic dictionaries, the entries of these words only offer very brief Arabic explanations, most of which are single words, leaving out the essential information of semantic constraints of the English words. For instance, "political" and "politician" would both be explained as "*siaasi*" in Arabic, hence obscuring the shades of meanings of the two English words.

As the table shows, 87% of the students who participated in the questionnaire say they use English-Arabic dictionary and 74% of them clearly stated that they prefer English-Arabic dictionary to English-English dictionary. Similarly, 64% of the students use cell phone dictionaries which is normally an English -Arabic one and provides the students with one-to-one equivalents. Moreover, 48% of the students use Arabic-English dictionary to search for unfamiliar English words by searching their Arabic equivalents. Those who read only the first meaning of an unfamiliar word constitute 48% of the students. What seems to aggravate lexical problems is writing the composition assignments in Arabic first; then translating it into English which is practiced by almost 30% of the students. These habits of using dictionaries seem to cause many lexical problems found in the output of the students.

Conclusion

The errors observed and discussed above demonstrate a weakness in the process of vocabulary learning by Arab students of English. Researchers in second language vocabulary acquisition assume that there are two main stages in learning words (Waring, 2001). The first stage is achieved when a connection is made between the meaning and the form of the word. The second stage is much more difficult and involves knowing when to use the word, its relationships, its shade of meanings, and so on.

The problem with many Arab learners of English is that they linger at the first stage and hesitate to proceed to the next stage, which calls for more cognitive efforts, time and energy. Students only remember the words' meanings , which are far from complete and accurate. It is not surprising that words memorized this way are isolated and decontextualized. The result is that the most practical aspect of lexical knowledge i.e., their usage is often unduly neglected, which means that students' lexical knowledge is more receptive than productive. Consequently, their use of a wide range of vocabulary is normally limited.

Pedagogic Implications
          In order to help the students use the vocabulary appropriately, language teachers should help them to establish clear ways of organizing and recording vocabulary. The way students store the items learned can contribute to their success or failure in retrieving them in language production. Lewis (1993) suggests the recording of whole sentences that show how new words are used to help contextualization. Moreover, the students should be trained in dictionary work and shown what each dictionary can give them, what it cannot, and what its most efficient use is.

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