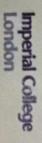# Certificate of Participation

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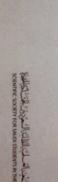acknowledging the valuable participation in

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Saudi Arabian Cultural Attaché in the UK

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The Acquisition of Past Tense by Saudi EFL Learners Positive or Negative Transfer?

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INTRODUCTION

Saudi EFL learners tend to struggle when using the past tense in English language. The problem is concentrated in the use of the past progressive tense and the past perfect tense. Previous studies claim that the problem is related to negative language transfer (Mazyad, 1999; Bouras, 2006; Qamar and Broome, 2009; AbuRiyah, 2011) among others.

Research questions examined here:
- To what extent does Arabic influence Saudi EFL learners' choices of the past tenses in English?
- What differences will arise among the participants, and how will guidance affect their choices of the past tenses?

Findings show that:
- The participants failed to acquire and produce correct forms of the examined past tenses.
- Arabic and English grammatical systems share similarities in the past tense, which should result in positive transfer.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted quantitative research method.

Examined tenses:
- The past progressive tense
- The past perfect tense

The participants:
Thirty-six Saudi EFL learners studying in the UK. The participants were divided into three groups: guided-planning group, semi-guided planning group, and no-planning group. The participants were examined individually and in groups in some cases.

The data elicitation tasks:
- Grammaticality Judgment Task
- Picture-Cued Storytelling Task

Statistical tool (SPSS) was utilized for the data analysis.

CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS

Kaana (was) is the past form of *Yakunu* (to be) and belongs to a group of auxiliaries known as Kaana and its sisters. Like all verbs in Arabic, *Kaana* inflects for six morphological categories: gender, number, person, tense, mood, and voice. *kaana*+Imperfect/Active Participle in Arabic imply progressive meaning and correspond to Past Progressive in English. Arab Grammarians did not explicitly discuss or explain the complexes forms [Kaana+Perfect], [Kaana+Qad+Perfect], [Qad+Kaana+Perfect], however, they serve as the counterpart of the English past perfect [had+Past Participle] (Al-Aswad, 1983; Er-Rayyaan, 1986; Comrie, 1991).

	English	Arabic
The Past Simple Tense	Past simple verb form (verb +ed) or irregular form They visited London	Past verb form *Zaaru* London visited-PERF-3mp London
The Past Progressive Tense	was/were + (verb+ing) I was sleeping. He was playing.	*Kanna*+Imperfect/Active Participle *Kuntu naaiman* (Active Participle) was-PERF-aux-1sg sleeping-IMP *Kaana yalaabu* (Perfect) was-PERF-aux-3msg playing-IMP
The Past Perfect Tense	had + Past Participle He had gone to London.	*Kaana*+Perfect/ *Kaana*+QAD+Perfect/ *QAD*+*Kaana*+Perfect *Kaana thahaba ela London* was-PERF-aux-3msg gone-PERF-3msg to London

RESULTS

Grammaticality Judgment Task GJT

Looking at table (1) below, the analysis shows no significant results between the three groups: guided-planning group, semi-guided planning group, and no-planning group [$F_{(2, 33)} = 0.512$, $p = 0.604$]. However, the participants from the guided-planning group showed better performance in their initiative judgment on task items ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 1.155$) than participants from semi-guided group ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 1.832$) and no-planning group ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.288$).

The same analysis was repeated on the results from the delayed GJT task. This time, the results yielded a slight significant change between the groups [$F_{(2,33)} = 3.317$, $p = 0.049$]. Again, the participants from the guided-planning group showed better performance in their initiative judgment on task items ($M = 4.83$, $SD = 1.115$) than participants from semi-guided group ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 1.557$) and no-planning group ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.793$). Table (2) reveals the gain score for the three groups after the delayed task.

Task	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig.
GJT	Guided-planning group	4.33	1.155	0.604
	Semi-guided planning group	3.92	1.832	
	No-planning group	3.75	1.288	
GJT (Delayed)	Guided-planning group	4.83	1.115	0.049
	Semi-guided planning group	4.33	1.557	
	No-planning group	3.58	0.793	

Group	GJT	GJT (Delayed)	Gain Score
Guided Planning	52	58	6.00
Semi-Guided Planning	47	52	5.00
No-Planning	45	43	-2.00

Picture-Cued Storytelling Task

The analysis shows no significant results emerged from the three groups [$F_{(2, 33)} = 1.384$, $p = 0.265$] in the past simple tense. However, the guided-planning group used the past simple tense in the storytelling task less than the other two groups ($M = 2.08$, $SD = 0.669$). Whereas the no-planning group used the past simple tense more frequently than the other two groups ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 0.522$), and the semi-guided planning group ($M = 2.33$, $SD = 0.651$). There was no statistically significant difference in the past progressive tense score between the three groups [$\chi^2(2) = 0.000$, $p = 1.000$] with a mean rank the past progressive tense score of (4.50) for each group. Again, the results show no statistical differences in the past perfect tense between the three groups [$\chi^2(2) = 0.000$, $p = 1.000$] with a mean rank the past perfect tense score of (2.50) for guided-planning group and semi-guided planning group. The no-planning group, however, scored zero. The scores analyzed in the category were obtained from only four participants out of thirty-six.

Task	Group	Mean	Sig.
The Past Simple	Guided-planning group	2.08	0.265
	Semi-guided planning group	2.50	
	No-planning group	2.33	
The Past Progressive	Guided-planning group	4.50	1.000
	Semi-guided planning group	4.50	
	No-planning group	4.50	
The Past Perfect	Guided-planning group	2.50	1.000
	Semi-guided planning group	2.50	
	No-planning group	0	

CONCLUSION

- The participants failed to produce correct English sentences in the past progressive tense and the past perfect tense.
- The participants failed to make correct judgment about grammatically deviant sentences.
- Contrastive analysis shows that Arabic and English systems are convergent in the past tense.
- Hence, the language transfer that is suppose to occur is positive.
- The problem of acquisition of the past tense in English could be attributed to educational background.
- More research will be carried out on this topic.

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