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## The Use of English Adjectives among Jordanian EFL students in Al-Albeyt University: An Error Analysis

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### Abstract

This is an error analysis of adjectives in English. The study aimed at identifying and explaining the problem Jordanian Arabic-speaking EFL learners encounter in using English adjectives. In order to report the results, the researcher has composed a test. The test is divided into two sections, the first section consists of four multiple choices to identify the patterns of errors in English adjectives, the second section includes eleven filling-gap questions to determine the types of adjectives in which Jordanian EFL students make errors. The test was given to 150 students. They were asked to answer the test in 20 minutes. The study revealed that Jordanian EFL students commit errors when using English adjectives especially in double comparative, *NP is (more/-er) adj. prep.phrase. NP*, and word Adjectives with generic and plural reference (*adj.s with plural reference. N*). The study also revealed that Jordanian students face problem in some types of adjectives especially in comparative, superlative adjectives and adjectives with prepositions. The main factors for the frequent errors in these patterns and types of adjectives are transfer from mother tongue to English language.

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**Keywords:** Patterns of errors, types of adjectives

## **1. Introduction**

The different aspects of English whether in phonology structure or semantics have become the focus of a growing number of studies on the difficulties of learners of English from different language backgrounds. It has been the firm belief of both theoreticians and practitioners alike that interference of the mother tongue has always a role to play in learning a second language and that role is best investigated through contrastive linguistics studies. Though the amount of first language interference in second/foreign language learning has always been a subject of heated debate and controversy, with contradicting research evidence reported by different scholars, there has always been enough justification for carrying out errors studies to make language learning easier, in addition to meeting our need for understanding language learning as a process. The case of the Arab learner of English poses more challenging questions, because of the genealogical as well as the structural differences from English. The Arab learner faces particular problems in learning the different structures of English. This study is concerned with one particular aspect of English grammatical structures, namely adjectives. A systematic error analysis study in English adjectives will be attempted to understand possible causes of the problems.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Arab learners of English have been found to face difficulties in various areas of English grammar, including adjectives. They are weak in almost all the types of adjectives taught at secondary school level in Arab countries. Kharma (1987) pointed out that Arab learners encounter difficulties in using English adjectives especially in comparative adjectives and word order. In order to use adjectives accurately, students must understand syntax, morphology, and semantics. Clearly, the use of adjectives is quite complex and can cause difficulties to students. Currently, there is no study which investigates the students' understanding of adjectives and how they use this grammatical category.

## **3. Objectives of the Study**

The aims of this study are to explore the various patterns of errors in adjectives committed by Arab learners of English in their writing, the types of errors and also the causes for the difficulties in using English adjectives by these learners.

The objectives of the study are as follow:

- 1) To determine the patterns of errors of adjectives committed by Arabic-speaking learners of English in Al-Albeyt university in Jordan.
- 2) To determine the types of adjectives they have difficulties in.

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- 3) To determine the causes for the students' difficulties in using English adjectives.

#### **4. Research Questions**

To achieve the research objectives, the study attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1- What patterns of errors do the Jordanian Arabic-speaking learners make in the use of English Adjectives?
- 2- What types of adjectives do they have difficulties in ?
- 3- What are the causes for the difficulties in using English adjectives by Jordanian Arabic-speaking learners of English in Al-Albeyt university in Jordan?

#### **5. Significance of the Study**

The investigation of patterns of errors committed by the learners in the first objective could reflect the flaws and weaknesses they could face in adjectives possibly in spoken English. It could also expose the types of adjectives that the learners are more comfortable with. The second objective could reveal the possible mistakes that the Arab learners commit after analyzing the results of the test and reveal possible interference between Arabic language and English language in using adjectives. In addition to its value as a contribution to theoretical linguistics, this study deepens our understanding of how such categories, adjectives, and function in both Arabic and English. It has a pragmatic value in the field of teaching English as a foreign language, and particularly for Arab students. This is one of the few studies conducted on the issue.

#### **6. Literature Review**

##### **6.1 Contrastive Analysis (CA):**

James (1998) described contrastive analysis (CA) as a process that includes first explaining comparative aspects of MT and TL. He provided examples such as tense, consonant clusters and comparing the two languages in terms of the form and meanings to determine the mismatches that lead to interference and error. He added the errors that learners would be committing as a result of transferring from L1 to L2. Lado (1957) in his theory that based upon Fries's theory assumes that second language learners may find some language aspects in the target language easy and some other difficult to learn. He assumes that those aspects which are the same in both the first and the foreign languages will be easy to learn, whereas those which are different will cause learning difficulties: "we can predict and describe the patterns that will cause difficulty in learning, and those that will not cause difficulty, by comparing systematically the language and culture to be learned with the native language and culture of the student".

##### **6.1.1 Contrastive Analysis on Arabic Learners**

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Many studies have been conducted concerning the issue of CA since it was first adopted by Fries (1945). All language aspects, including structure, phonology and grammar were analyzed. Many languages came to be contrasted with others. A great number of studies were made in the late 50's and early 60's on the issue and many others followed, such as the Georgetown Roundtable Papers devoted to CA. James (1980). Khuwaileh and Al Shoumali (2000) conducted a study of the writing ability of Arab learners of academic English and Arabic at a university. Lack of cohesion, coherence tense errors and parts of speech errors were the most serious and frequent ones. This study is related to the present study in terms of Arab learners compare the aspects of English language through learning with their native language. Saeed and Fareh (2006) carried out a study to investigate the problems that translators and Arab learners of English confront in translating Arabic sentences containing the Arabic discourse marker "Fa" into English. In this study five functions of Arab's "Fa" were represented in translation task. Each function was manifested in six sentences. The students in this study used their native language to translate the thirty sentences to English language.

### **6.1.2 Criticisms of contrastive analysis**

Criticisms of CA were directed in two different attitudes ranging between total rejection to acceptance with modification. Among those who rejected CA completely was New Mark (1966) who thought it was irrelevant and unnecessary. He interpreted what other linguists took for interference by suggesting that it was due to a gap in the second- language learner rather than to the so-called interference for language transfer. Thus, in order to fill this gap in his knowledge of the target language, the learner tends to apply the rules of his language upon the target language deliberately and knowingly. He suggested what he thought to be the best remedial process for this interference: it is only by learning which the only possible and practical cure for ignorance is. If the learner had known everything he needed about the target language, he would have got rid of all the sources of his anxiety concerning learning a second language that are his faults and errors.

### **6.2 Error Analysis (EA)**

James (1998) said that Error Analysis (EA) is a process of specifying causes, nature sequences and consequences of unsuccessful language. Selinker (1992) defined errors as "red flags" that provide evidence of the learner's knowledge of the second language. Lennon (1991:182) defined error analysis as a linguistic form which will not be produced by the native speakers counterparts in the same context and under similar conditions of production. Corder (1967) was the first who introduced error analysis as a medium of language learning process. He claimed that by categorising the errors that learners committed, researchers could learn a great deal of second language acquisition process by concluding the strategies that were used by second language learners.

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Corder (1975) suggested that errors can be significant because:

- 1) They tell the researcher how far the second –language learner has achieved and what other things need be emphasized
- 2) They tell the researcher how the process of second-language acquisition proceeds; and
- 3) They can be taken by the second-language learner to test how far he has gone through second language acquisition (pp. 127). Errors are part of a system and they are important in three ways. First for the learner which tells him if he undertakes the systematic analysis and if the goal of learning which he progressed in is far or not. Secondly, these errors provide the researcher with examples of how he can learn a language. Thirdly, what are the procedures that the learner use to discover the language. (Corder, 1974).

Richards (1978) suggests six taxonomies in his classification of causes of errors:

1-Interference: interference means the influence of mother tongue upon the process of second –language learning and the transfer of the rules of the first language to the target language. This can be termed differently as interlanguages or interlingual effect.

2-Overgeneralisation: This includes all errors made by the foreign language learner due to his extension of certain rules to other areas where they prove invalid. When learners are not sure about their fundamental rules required for some needed aspect , they usually tend to overgeneralise a rule or rules they memorize without being aware of its/ their irregularities.

3-Performance errors: sometimes a learner invents false rules due to fatigue, memory lapses or confusion.

4-Developmental errors: they reflect the learners' false hypotheses due to the strategies by which they acquire the second language. These errors are committed independently of both the first language and the foreign language, and are due to incomplete mastery of some aspects of the second language. This can be noticed in children when they are learning their mother tongue. Sometimes they overgeneralise and some other times they invent the 'rules' they think are valid.

5-Strategies of communication and assimilation: these errors are due to the learners eagerness to communicate with native speakers of the second language without having mastered that language to the extent that enables him to convey his thoughts to the listener. Therefore, he tends to speak un-systematically, and unaware of the foreign language rule application.

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6-Pedagogical effect or teacher-induced errors: these errors are due to defective textbooks or the foreign-language teacher's inability to apply the textbook efficiently.

### **6.2.1 Criticisms of Error Analysis**

Error analysis (EA), like contrastive analysis, met some criticisms. Schacter (1974) said that EA does not always give true and practical results. Students often do difficult or erroneous structures and constructions by 'beating round the bush', i.e. by giving the meaning they want by means of paraphrasing. Her samples consisted of Arab, Persian, Chinese and Japanese learners of English as a second language. Arab and Persian learners committed several errors in using restrictive relative clauses, whereas the Chinese and the Japanese learners did not use such constructions except when they felt quite secure about their accuracy. So, the errors committed by the Chinese and the Japanese were fewer than those committed by the Arabs and the Persian subjects. According to Chau (1975:122) Error Analysis has a lack of objectivity in the analysis of its procedures, lack in defining and classifying errors. Another limitation of EA is that it does not have explanatory function for errors. It just lists the categories of errors according to their occurrence.

Another point against EA can be demonstrated by overgeneralising inter-language/intralanguage distinction suggested by Richards (1971). Celce-Murcia (1977) gives examples of tests which were given to two samples: one of native speakers and the other of non-native speakers of different backgrounds. Most errors were intralingual. In such case, too, the situation stressed the need for a contrastive analysis to help the error analysis give the expected satisfactory results. Such limitations of EA are presented in J. Schachter and M. Celce-Murcia (1977 pp.441-451). Such limitations on both CA and EA motivated some researchers to find other better approaches. Therefore, a new one was suggested, that was the interlanguage (IA) analysis, the more comprehensive and practical approach.

### **6.2.2 Error Analysis on Arab Learners**

Bataineh (2005) conducted a study on Jordanian undergraduate EFL students' errors in the use of the indefinite articles. She revealed that a large number of errors were made by deleting the indefinite article and these errors are due to the native language transfer. Mukattash (1983) in his study presented at the first conference on the problems of teaching English language and literature at Arab universities which was held in the University of Jordan divides the problems that Arab learners encounter into two types. First, university students tend to commit errors in spelling, pronunciation, morphology and syntax. Secondly, they are unable to express themselves when they deal with academic topics. He added that students face difficulties in using English because they cannot use English correctly in and outside classroom which means that these difficulties

are due to the students' deficiencies in communicative competence and self-expression. Wahba (1998) in his study on Egyptian students summarized these problems as follows: Egyptian students face certain problems related to pronunciation. Some of these problems are related to stress, others are related to intonation. However, most of these problems can be attributed to the differences in pronunciation between English and Arabic.

### **6.3 Interlanguage (IL)**

Selinker (1972) defined interlanguage as the linguistic system shown when second language adult learners attempted to express meanings in the language being learned. It depends on a theory that there is a "psychological structure latent in the brain" which is evidenced when one attempts to learn a second language. The second language learners preserve some characteristics of their first language in speaking or writing the target language and creating innovations. The term 'interlanguage' was coined by Selinker (1972) to refer to interim grammars built by second language learners to reach to the target language. It shows similar constructs such as 'approximative system' (Nemser 1971) and 'transitional competence'. According to Adjemian (1976) Interlanguage is a natural language but it has a permeable grammar. He means by natural language 'any human language used among the society of speakers and through some processes of evaluation, it became developmental.

Selinker (1972) lists five factors which immediately influence the output of the interlanguage system:

1. Language transfer
2. Transfer of training
3. Strategies of second language learning
4. Strategies of second language communication
5. Overgeneralization

Tarone (1979) stated that interlanguage can be analysed into a range of styles that depend on the context of use. Tarone cited evidence from research literature implying that learner's utterance s is variables divided into two senses:

- 1- Linguistic context may have an effect on the learner's use of the phonological and syntactic structures.
- 2- The task used for extraction of data from learners may have an effect on the learner's production of the phonological and syntactic structures. Tarone maintained that the evidence shows that interlanguage speech production changes according to the context and the task of extraction.

## **7. The Instrument**

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In this study, a 20 minute multiple choice test is used as a data collection instrument. There are 15 multiple choice questions for the students to complete in 20 minutes. The questions are set up according to types of errors in the usage of adjectives in English following the categories used by Kharma (1987:153). These are:

- (1) *NP is (more/-er) adj. prep. phrase NP.*  
*The man is bigger from his son.*
- (2) *NP is NP.adj. (word order)*  
*He is a boy tall.*
- (3) *Adjectives with generic and plural reference (adj.s with plural reference. N)*  
*The rich men will help the poor men.*
- (4) *NP is (far/much) more adj. than NP. (Double comparative)*  
*She is much more richer than my sister.*

The researcher followed Kharma (1987) because the results of the study that he carried out on Arab-speaking learners support the present study.

The test is composed of two sections. The first section comprises of 4 multiple choice items. Each item refers to one pattern of errors in Kharma' categories (1987). Section two is 11 filling-gap questions where each gap refers to one type of adjectives that listed by Hewings (2005) as follows:

1. Gradable adjectives
2. Non-gradable adjectives
3. Participle adjectives
4. Compound adjectives
5. Adjectives with to-infinitive
6. Adjectives with that-clause
7. Comparative adjectives
8. Superlative adjectives
9. Attributive adjectives
10. Predicative adjectives
11. Adjectives with prepositional phrase.

## **8. The Subjects**

The subjects in this study are students in Al-Albeyt University in Jordan. The subjects are 22 years old and now in the fourth year in Al Albeyt University. The subjects are 150 Jordanian students (75 girls and 75 boys) from the department of English in Al-Albeyt university in AlMfraa province in Jordan who are studying grammar1 (E103).

## **9. The Procedures**

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Error analysis was chosen as the framework for data analysis because Error Analysis views errors as highly systematic, serving as ‘windows’ to the learners’ progress in the second language Selinker (1992) cites Corder (1967) that errors are shown to provide insights into the child learner's development of language. The researcher adopted Corder's Error Analysis procedure because it is similar in its procedure to the study of error analysis intended by the researcher and therefore seems suitable for the study.

The steps used for the analysis of data in the present study were as follows:

- \* First, the corpus of the language is chosen for this study. The size of the sample, the research instruments and the homogeneity of the sample in accordance to the research as a case study are also decided.
- \* Next, errors were made by the learners in the corpus are identified.
- \* Then the errors are classified using Kharma patterns of errors (1987).
- \* After that, the errors are explained in terms of either the intralingual or interlingual factors.
- \* Lastly, the errors are evaluated, involving assessing the seriousness of each error in order to suggest relevant suggestions or recommendations.

The test was administrated by an English teacher in Jordan. He distributed the test to the students after the class directly. Students were given 20 minutes to answer the test questions.

## **10. Results of the study**

### **10.1 Patterns of errors**

The study looked at four patterns of errors made by Arab-speaking learners. This section will first discuss the errors based on Kharma’s four patterns accordingly. Kharma (1987) identified 4 patterns of errors which L2 learners adopt when they use English adjectives.

They are:

1. The man is bigger from his son.
2. He is a boy tall.
3. The rich men will help the poor men.
4. She is much richer than my sister.

In order to discuss the results of the study, the researcher divides table 1 according to each pattern. The analysis is done according to each pattern. The findings are presented in terms of percentages.

## Overall Results

Table 1 displays the number of correct and incorrect responses by students for the four items in section 1 of the test.

Patterns	correct	%	incorrect	%	blank	Total
1. The man is bigger from his son.	21	14	127	85	2	150
2. He is a boy tall.	21	68	47	31	1	150
3. The rich men will help the poor men.	32	21	118	79	0	150
4. She is much richer than my sister.	11	11	137	91	2	150

As can be seen from the table, of the four error patterns, pattern 4 is (double comparative) made by most of the respondents such as:

\* *She is much richer than my sister.*

Only 11%. Save the correct answer, which is:  
*She is richer than my sister.*

Also it can be noticed that the previous pattern was followed by the pattern The man is bigger from his son which has the second highest percentage of incorrect answers 85%.

For example:

\* *This watch is cheaper from that one.* (85% incorrect answer)

*This watch is cheaper than that one.* (14% correct answer)

Likewise, it could be seen that the third highest percentage of the incorrect answers was the pattern The rich men will help the poor men. This percentage reached to 79%. For example:

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\* *The rich men should give people who are poor.* (79% incorrect answer)  
*The rich should give people who are poor.* (21% correct answer)

Finally, the pattern "He is a boy tall" has the lowest percentage of incorrect answers, about 31%. For example:

\* *He is a boy tall.* (31% incorrect answer)  
*He is a tall boy.* (68% correct answer)

Upon examining the previous table, one must have noticed that the most common pattern of errors seems to involve the comparative adjectives. Errors involving comparative adjectives constitute the highest percentage of incorrect answers, that is, 91%. Thus, this demonstrates that Arab-speaking learners are actually facing more difficulties using comparative adjectives compared to the other types of English adjectives.

Students seem to be unsure of the concept of comparative adjectives. However, in some types of adjectives, the students do not have problems especially in attributive and predicative adjectives.

## 10.2 Causes of the Errors

In the first two cases of the patterns of errors cited above (*double comparative*), *NP is (more/-er) adj.prep.phrase. NP*) that Arab-speaking learners commit in using the English adjectives, the likely factor in choosing the incorrect answers could be attributed to the fact that those students transfer from their mother tongue to English language. This is because in Arabic language there is no *more* or *most*. Instead, there are '*Ashed*' and '*Akther*' (comparative forms in Arabic) and they can be used with one syllable and two or more syllable adjectives unlike English where '*more*' and '*most*' used with two or more syllable adjectives. For example:

*Mona ajmel min sara* ( *Mona is more beautiful than Sara*)  
*Albentan ajmel min alwaladan* ( *The 2 girls are more beautiful than the 2 boys*)

As discussed above, Arab students including Jordanians tend to transfer the adjectives rules in Arabic language to English language.

Errors involving word order may also be due to language transfer. 31% of the respondents committed this error.

\*(1) *He is a boy tall.* (31% incorrect)

One possible explanation for why Jordanian learners precede the adjective with noun is that they transfer from their native language to English language, in Arabic language,

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attributive adjectives come after the nouns not before as in English, for example:

(4) *Hathhe bent jameelah* .

In example (4), 'bent' is a noun and 'jameelah' is an adjective and it is incorrect to say: Hathhe jameelah bent.

Selinker (1972) confirmed the transfer factor through the five factors which influence the output of the interlanguage system, these factors are:

1. Language transfer
2. Transfer of training
3. Strategies of second language learning
4. Strategies of second language communication
5. Overgeneralization

### 10.3 Types of Adjectives

In addition to patterns of errors, the test also examines types of adjectives that may cause difficulties to the respondents. Types of adjectives refer to the forms of adjectives identified according to Hewings (2005). The second section of the test, the students were asked to derive the right adjective from the word in brackets.

In order to identify the types of adjectives the Jordanians have difficulties in , the researcher divides table 2 according to each type. The analysis is done according to each type. The findings are presented in terms of percentages.

#### Overall results

Table 2 displays the number of correct and incorrect responses by students for the types of adjectives according to Hewings (2005).

Types	Correct	%	Incorrect	%	Blank	Total
Adj.s + prepositions	58	39	92	61	0	150
Adj.s + that-clause	116	77	34	24	0	150
Adj.s + to-infinitive	103	67	47	33	0	150

Attributive Adjectives	108	72	42	28	0	150
Superlative Adj.s	65	43	85	57	0	150
Predicative Adj.s	111	74	39	26	0	150
Comparative Adj.s	56	37	94	63	0	150
Gradable Adjectives	120	80	30	20	0	150
Non-gradable Adj.s	70	45	80	53	0	150
Compound Adj.s	105	70	44	29	1	150
Participle Adj.s	90	60	60	40	0	150

From the table displayed, it appears that the type of adjective that has the highest percentage of incorrect answers is *comparative adjective*. 63% of the respondents chose *superlative* instead of *comparative*. 37% of respondents chose *comparative*. This means that Jordanian students face difficulties in this type of adjectives. For example:

*Some people are \_\_\_\_\_ (rely) than others.*

*\*Some people are most reliable than others. (63% incorrect answer)*

*Some people are more reliable than others. (37% the correct answer)*

Then the type of adjectives that has the second highest percentage of incorrect answers is *adjectives with prepositions*. 61% of the respondents chose *from* instead of *than*. 39% of respondents chose *than*. This points that Jordanian students encounter problems in this type of adjective. For example:

*The girl is afraid \_\_\_\_\_ exams.*

*\* The girl is afraid from exams. (61% incorrect answer)*

*The girl is afraid of exams. (39% the correct answer)*

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The type of adjectives that has the third highest percentage of incorrect answers is *superlative adjectives*. 57% of the respondents chose comparative instead of superlative. 43% of respondents chose superlative which leads that Jordanian students have difficulties in distinguishing between superlative and comparative. For example:

*Do you know who the \_\_\_\_\_ (intelligence) in the class is?*

*Do you know who the more intelligent in the class is? (57% incorrect answer)*

*Do you know who the most intelligent in the class is? (43% correct answer)*

The type of adjectives that has the fourth highest percentage of incorrect answers is *non-gradable adjectives*. 53% of the respondents put *completely* after *excellent*. 45% of respondents put *completely* before *excellent*. This means that Jordanian students have few difficulties in this type of adjective because the percentage of incorrect responses is close to the percentage of the correct ones. For example:

*The food was \_\_\_\_\_ . (excellent/completely)*

*\* The food was excellent completely. (53% incorrect answer)*

*The food was completely excellent. (43% correct answer)*

The other types of adjectives did not pose many problems to most of the respondents. Less than 40% of the respondents gave the wrong answers for each of them. The type of adjectives in which 40% of respondents made errors is *participle adjectives*. They chose *welcome* instead of *welcoming*. 60% of respondents chose *welcoming*. This is evidence that Jordanian students face few problems in this type of adjectives. For example:

*The hotel had a \_\_\_\_\_ atmosphere. (welcome)*

*\* The hotel had a welcome atmosphere. (40% incorrect answer)*

*The hotel had a welcoming atmosphere. (60% correct answer)*

This is followed by the type *Adjectives with to-infinitive* which has a low percentage. 33% of the respondents chose 'hear' instead of 'to hear'. 67% of respondents chose the correct answer that is *to hear* which means that Jordanian students rarely face problems in this type of adjective. For example:

*He is curious \_\_\_\_\_ it. (hear)*

*\* He is curious hearing it. (33% incorrect answer)*

*He is curious to hear it. (67% correct answer)*

Compound adjectives are quite easy for Jordanian students. 29% of the respondents answered *make-ready* instead of *ready-made*. 70% of respondents answered *ready-made* which means that Jordanian students do not have problems in this type of adjectives compared to the types of adjectives discussed above. For example:

*She seems to live on \_\_\_\_\_ frozen meals. (make /ready)*

*\*She seems to live on make-ready frozen meals. (29% incorrect answer)*

*She seems to live on ready-made frozen meals. (70% correct answer)*

The type of adjectives that has 28% of incorrect answers is *attributive adjectives*. The respondents chose *sunning* in stead of *sunny*. 72% chose *sunny*. For example:

*It is a nice \_\_\_\_\_ day. (sun)*

*\*It is a nice sunning day. (28% incorrect answer)*

*It is a nice sunny day. (72% correct answer)*

Then, it is followed by *predicative adjectives*. 26% of respondents chose *producing* instead of *productive*. 74% of respondents chose *productive* which prove that Jordanian students face a very few difficulties in this type of adjective. For example:

*Our meeting last night was \_\_\_\_\_ . (produce)*

*\*Our meeting last night was producing. (Incorrect answer)*

*Our meeting last night was productive. (The correct answer)*

This is followed by the type *adjectives with that-clause*. 24% of respondents gave incorrect responses for this type of adjectives in which they chose *he that* instead of *that he*. 77% of the respondents chose the correct answer which is that *he*. For example:

*I am sure \_\_\_\_\_ will be absent. (he/ that).*

*\*I am sure he that will be absent. (24% incorrect answer)*

*I am sure that he will be absent. (77% correct answer)*

The lowest percentage of incorrect answers is the *gradable adjectives*. 20% of the respondents put *extremely* after *tall* instead of putting *extremely* before *tall*. 80% of respondents chose the correct answer that is they put *extremely* before *tall*. Namely Jordanian students do not encounter problems in this type of adjective. For example:

*John is \_\_\_\_\_ . (tall/extremely)*

*\*John is tall extremely. (20% incorrect answer)*

*John is extremely tall. (80% correct answer)*

From the findings, the most difficult adjective seems to be *comparative adjectives*. Errors involving *comparative adjectives* constitute the highest percentage of incorrect answers. The second highest percentage of errors involves *Adjectives with prepositions*, and the third, *superlative adjectives*.

This demonstrates that Jordanians are actually encountering more difficulties using comparative adjectives, adjectives with prepositions and superlative adjectives compared to the other types of adjectives.

The three types of adjectives mentioned above are the most difficult adjectives to use for Jordanian learners. Mukattash in his study carried out in 1983 concluded that the six most frequent categories of errors in adjectives are after verbals, articles, nominals, prepositions, and relatives. There were 2.7% of adjectival errors in his data. The most frequent is the use of nouns instead of adjectives followed by errors in degree, use of one after adjectives and adjective misformation. The study that Mukattish carried out in (1983) corresponds with the current study that concludes that Arabic-speaking learners confront difficulties in some types of adjectives such as adjectives with prepositions.

#### 10.4 Causes of the Errors

This section discusses possible causes of the errors committed in section two of the test. As shown earlier, the most frequent errors occurred is comparative adjectives. For example:

*Some people are \_\_\_\_\_ (rely) than others.*

*\*Some people are most reliable than others. (63% incorrect answer)*

*Some people are more reliable than others. (37% correct answer)*

In this case, the Arab learners tend to transfer from the mother tongue to the English language because comparative adjectives in Arabic are different from English where there are no *more* and *most* in Arabic language. But there are *Ashed* and *akther* instead which express comparative adjectives in Arabic language. For example:

*Albento ajmel min Akteha (the girl is more beautiful than her sister)*

As discussed in the example above, there is no *more* in Arabic language and this may be the only factor where Arab learners apply the Arabic rules to English. In superlative adjectives, the factor is the same where Arab learners transfer from their native language to the English language. For example:

*Do you know who the \_\_\_\_\_ (intelligence) in the class is?*

*Do you know who the more intelligent in the class is? (57% incorrect answer)*

*Do you know who the most intelligent in the class is? (43% correct answer)*

In this case, Arab learners also transfer from their native language some rules and use them in English language. This is the main factor why Jordanian students answer this item incorrectly. For example:

*Ja'a Alrajol al' thke (the most intelligent boy came)*

This example indicates that Arabic language does not have *most* in superlative adjective. On the contrary, English has *most* in making a comparison between one and group. For adjectives with prepositions, 61% of respondents gave incorrect responses. The factor that leads to this problem is that Arabic learners are sometimes taught in Arabic language in the primary stage and they use their native language in forming adjectives with prepositions. For example:

*Hwa Ka'ef min Al'af'a (He is a afraid of the snake)*

In the example above, Arab learners use *min* instead of *of* because it is easier in their language and has the same meaning. However, *of* does not mean any thing for them and it is not easy to use this adjective.

## 11. Conclusion

The main concern of this study is to find out the problems confronted by Arab learners in learning English adjectives as well as to investigate the possible reasons for these difficulties and find out some possible measures that can be taken to overcome them. The findings obtained in this research suggest that:

1. Learners do encounter difficulties in studying English adjectives.
2. Learners tend to depend on first language (L1) when using English adjectives to solve this problem, so attention should be paid by teachers on this grammatical category.
3. More attention needs to be given to *NP is (much/far) more adj. than NP* (double comparative) instead of all three.
4. More attention should be concentrated on comparative followed with preposition (*the NP is (more/-er) adj. prep. phrase. NP*).
5. It is probably worthwhile for teachers to spend more time on comparative s compared to other adjectives.
6. It would seem appropriate that the teaching be done in a way that gives speakers of languages that have different system from English more opportunities for exposure to authentic and meaningful English.
7. Teachers and textbook writers should be aware of the difference between adjectives in Arabic and English in order for them to present those important grammatical categories meaningfully to Arabic speaking learners of English.
8. The instructional design is worthwhile to present directly or in a simplified manner since the adjectives system is so complex.

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## **Appendix** QUESTION SHEET

1. On your answer sheet, write the letter of the word that best fits the blank space in each of the following sentences.
- 

1. This watch is \_\_\_\_\_ that one.

- a) cheaper from
- b) cheaper than
- c) cheaper of

2. He is a \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a) boy tall

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- b) tall boy
- c) boy taller

3. The \_\_\_\_\_ should give people who are poor.

- a) rich
- b) rich men
- c) people rich

4. She is \_\_\_\_\_ than my sister.

- a) More richer
- b) richer
- c) much more richer

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2) On your answer sheet, write the correct form of the word in brackets that best fits the blank space in each of the following sentences.

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- 5. The girl is afraid \_\_\_\_\_ exams.
- 6. I am sure \_\_\_\_\_ will be absent. (he/that)
- 7. He is curious \_\_\_\_\_ it. (hear)
- 8. It is a nice \_\_\_\_\_ day. (sun)
- 9. Our meeting last night was \_\_\_\_\_. (produce)
- 10. The food was \_\_\_\_\_. (excellent/completely)
- 11. Some people are \_\_\_\_\_ than others. (rely)
- 12. Do you know who the \_\_\_\_\_ in the class is? (intelligence)
- 13. She seems to live on \_\_\_\_\_ frozen meals. (make/ready)
- 14. John is \_\_\_\_\_. (tall/extremely)
- 15. The hotel had a \_\_\_\_\_ atmosphere. (welcome)

\_\_\_ Good Luck \_\_\_

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