

Dongolese language and its Impact in Understanding English Lexis

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Abstract:

The present study aims at investigating lexical errors experienced by Dongolese EFL learners. The purpose is to investigate how English lexis have been affected by Dongolese language and colloquial Arabic. The method used in the study is the error analysis (EA) and contrastive Analysis (CA) approaches. The subject of the study consist of Dongolese students in North Sudan, the researcher used the vocabulary test for gathering data. It has been found that, colloquial Arabic and Dongolese language have affected learn English lexis by Dongolese learners tested.

Key words: Dongolese language, English Lexis

1.0. Context of the research

English language has a peculiar status in Sudan regarding language planning and language policy. Consequently, it is taught as a foreign language; meanwhile, Sudan is a multi lingual and multi cultural country that comprises various ethnic groups and tribes. One of these ethnic groups is Dongolese that speaks Nubian language as a mother tongue where Arabic and English are used as an instructional language and foreign language at educational institutions. Pedagogically, learning EFL confronts different aspects of

interlanguage, intralanguage, mother tongue constrains, fossilization and language conflict. Hence, deviation from English language's convention and norms among Dongolese learners is inevitable. Furthermore, it can help teachers, educators and syllabus designer comprehend the major sources of errors among Dongolese learners aiming at finding out the appropriate pedagogic and linguistics remedies.

Errors and mistakes are indispensable and mile stone in learning EFL. In addition, they have a mutual rapport of linguistic competence and performance. This study aims at investigating errors made by Dongolese learners in order to facilitate the process of foreign language learning and teaching. The researcher proposes that Dongolese English learner's stereotypic error are originated due to the inter language that indicates the process of approximative system of mother tongue's effect on the target language; besides, learners deviated from target language's norms by constructing their own way to master the target language.

Nowadays, learning and mastering English is a basic academic and even social requirement. English is the lingua franca of international communication. Vocabulary is, in turn, a crucial aspect of communication. Lexical errors are important factors leading to communication breakdown.

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A lexical unit can be made up of a single word or morpheme (e.g. *table*) or of several words (e.g. *take up*, *rush hour* and *to kick the bucket*). Phrasal verbs, adverbial phrases or idioms are also considered to be words or lexical items. A further distinction is usually made in the literature between lexical and grammatical words. The former group is made up of words belonging to the class of nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs, whereas prepositions, articles and conjunctions make up the latter group. Lexical errors will affect lexical words, while errors that affect grammatical words will be studied as grammar errors (Celaya & Torras, 2001; Hemchua & Schmitt, 2006).

Identifying and isolating lexical errors is not always an easy task. Lexical competence refers not only to semantic knowledge but also to morphological, syntactic and pragmatic knowledge. Thus, 'knowing a word' means knowing how to use it appropriately in context, in combination with other words (collocation) and in particular communicative situation and texts (i.e. style and pragmatic force) (Ambroso, 2000: 58). Therefore, in order to spot a lexical error, the communicative and situational context (interlocutor, mode and style) must also be taken into account. Lexical errors also serve a very important purpose in research about second language (vocabulary) acquisition. Lexical errors have proved to be objective setters of quality criteria, and as such they have been repeatedly used as measures of overall language proficiency, in general, and as indicators of lexical progress, in particular.

Teaching can also benefit from the results of this study by providing learners with word lists of problematic lexical items and the lexical errors that affect them. Doing exercises will help reduce the number of lexical errors, and thus improve the quality of students' written tasks, in addition, Lexical errors are considered to be very damaging to communication, because they affect the meaning of the message.

Although several researches have been conducted in discussing the various errors committed by learners of English in Sudan, there has been little discussion in the area of lexical errors among local Sudanese language.

1.1. Statement of the problem

This research will attempt to investigate lexical errors experienced by Dongolese EFL in Sudan in order of facilitate the process of teaching and learning English among Dongolese communities and to give Dongolese learners an insight about their problematic areas while learning English, in addition the researcher would like to contribute to his community by facilitating learning English among Dongolese learners. Moreover, lexical errors are considered to be of the most serious type, even students believe that of all error types, those having to do with vocabulary are the most serious one.

1.2 . Questions of the research

The researcher raises a number of important questions whose answers, hopefully, provide a valuable insight into the issue of errors committed by Dongolese learners while learning English

1. To what extent does the Dongolese language in Sudan affect learning English?
2. What kinds of errors are experienced by Dongolese learners while learning English?
3. In which aspect of language are these errors noticeable?

1.3. Research objectives

1. To find out the kinds of errors committed by Dongolese learners.
2. To determine the aspect of language that has been affected by these errors.

1.4. Hypothesis of the research

The researcher hypothesizes that:

1. Dongolese learners of English experienced different types of lexical errors while learning English.
2. These errors are due to mother tongue interference as a major cause of difficulty, and other factors besides.

1.5. Significance of the Learner's Errors

This research is hopefully expected to be a significant contribution to English language teaching and learning of Nile Nubian groups in NS in general, and Dongolese groups in particular. The study will provide new insights into Dongolese lexical errors while learning English, so the coming researcher can benefit from it, when they conduct studies relevant to error of Dongolese in English. From the finding of this research Dongolese learners of English will have an insight about their problematic areas in English. Teachers who teach in Dongolese communities will have an idea about their students' errors in English language. Errors are means of feedback to the teacher reflecting how effective his/her teaching style and what changes he had to make to get higher performance from his learner. Moreover, this research on lexical errors are significant data for syllabus designs as they show what items are important to be included or which items needs to be recycled in the syllabus. Syllabus designers might modify the syllabus to meet the needs of these local languages not only Nile Nubian groups but also local languages in Sudan in general.

1.6. Limitation of the study

This research is limited to students (third class secondary schools) who lived in Dongla city and the rural areas around it. It focuses on lexical errors experienced by those students in written English.

1.7. Definition of some important terms

The following terms will be used throughout the study and have therefore defined procedurally as follows:

Dongolese language

Is one of Nubian languages family and it is the language spoken in the NS by Dongolese groups.

Colloquial Arabic

A language used in conversation, but not in the formal speaking or writing in almost all parts of Sudan.

Standard Arabic

Ancient in its form and no longer used in spoken form, it is used in formal speech or writing (Oxford Advanced learners dictionary, 2002).

Lexical errors

Is a deviation in form and /or meaning of a target language lexical word. In other words it is the incorrect choice of lexical item.

Interlingual

It refers to errors that are caused by the learner's mother tongue.

Intralingual

It refers to errors that are not caused by the learner's mother tongue.

2.0. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Frame work

2.2. What is an Error?

Error has literal and conceptual meanings. Error as a word in a dictionary means something, which is wrongly done. In spoken or written language, error is the use of a linguistic item in a way a native speaker regards as faulty or incomplete communication. Errors occur when the learner uses her/his intelligence in constructing a new utterance; while some errors are evidence of rule ignorance. Dulay (1982) stated that errors are the flawed side selection norm of mature language behavior. While Klossen (1991) has noted that errors are forms or structure that a native speaker regards unacceptable because of their inappropriate use.

2.3. Significance of the Learner's Errors

Errors provide feed back; they tell the teacher something about the effectiveness of teaching methods and show what part of the syllabus covered has been inadequately learned or taught that need further attention.

According to Corder (1974: 25) errors are significant in three different ways:

"First to the teacher, in that they tell him, if he undertakes a systematic analysis; how far towards the goal the learner has progressed and, consequently, what remains for him to learn. Secondly, they provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in his discovery of the language. Thirdly (and in a sense this is their most important aspect) they are indispensable to the learner him self, because we can regard the making of errors as a device the learner uses in order to learn.

2.4 Previous Studies

Dongolese language (language under study) a member of the Nile-Saharan family. They belongs to the eastern sudanic branch to which the Nubian group affiliates. The Nubian group includes: Nile Nubian, Hill Nubian and Darfur Nubian, which are distributed, as proposed by Bell, H, and C (1973) .

In a research entitled 'A phonological comparison of the Katcha Kadugli language Groups in Nuba Mountains' University of Khartoum written by Rihab Yahia Dafallah(2002), The ultimate of this study is to make a phonological comparison of nine Katcha - Kaduali languages of Nuba Mountains which include Katcha, Kufa, Keiga, Kamda, Kuntulishi, Miri , Shororo- Kursi- Kanga and Kadugli.

The Katcha – Kadugli group live in the Southern district of the Nuba Mountains, very few linguistic studies have been published on these languages which is one of the reasons for her study. She uses the comparative method ,the results obtained show that in spite of the phonological similarities between these languages, there are many differences in the pronunciation of some sounds between the groups. It is concluded that most of the groups could be classified as languages even though there is definitely a close relationship between them.

Samira (2001:227) undertook a comparative study of three Nubian branches (i.e. Nile Nubian, Darfur Nubian and Kordofan Nubian) in order to determine the kind of relationship that holds between them. Dongolese, Midob and Kubur were chosen to represent the three branches respectively.

She tested the genetic relationship by comparing one grammatical aspect (Verbal suffixes). She found out that Dongolese was the closest to the old Nubian in terms of both forms and distribution. She also (2001:112) noted that the use o epenthetic vowel/i/is common in Dongolese.

METHODOLOGY

3.0. Introduction

Error Analysis and contrastive analysis method have been used by many researchers to obtain results on lexical errors about their subjects under investigation.

3.1. Data Collection

Data have been obtained by: vocabulary test.

3.1.1. Subjects

The subjects that have been chosen for the present study consists of a group of Sudanese secondary schools, and their ages ranges between 16-18 years. Four schools (boys and girls) were chosen from Dongla city and the villages around it in Northern Sudan. 100 subjects were selected , 50 of the subjects are females and 50 males. Two hundred subjects were chosen for the vocabulary test, one hundred males and one hundred females. The subjects are from Dongolese and non- Dongolese tribes.

All the subjects have studied six years of EFL. Some of them speak Dongolese Language; others speak Arabic as their mother tongue. The Justification for choosing the subjects from Dongla city is that since we are looking for a real native speaker of Dongolese, it is the general belief that in NS the more you go further north the more you find people who stick to their mother tongue.

The researcher chooses the above subjects for the following reasons:

- 1) Dongla city and the village around it is the place of real native speakers of Dongolese groups.
- 2) The researcher chooses third year secondary school because students were all in a Dongolese speaking Language environment.

- 3) The researcher did not choose students from University of Dongla because students are from different parts of Sudan and it is difficult to select Dongolese groups among them.

3.1 2. Instruments

Data have been obtained from the students' vocabulary test, and the vocabulary test were given to Dongolese groups and non-Dongolese . and the researcher gave the vocabulary test to Dongolese and non Dongolese in order to establish comparison, since they were living together and having the same culture, and sharing the same social background, the researcher would like to test whether the answers from Dongolese groups and non-Dongolese will be the same or not and vocabulary test is a good tool to do so.

3.1.3. Vocabulary Test

Two hundred samples were collected, a hundred were collected from Dongolese and another hundred were collected from non-Dongolese. In Dongolese participants, 50 were males and 50 females, in non-Dongolese on the other hand, 50 males, and 50 females. All words that are used in vocabulary test are from the spine(Sudan Integrated National English). Students were given an hour to complete the task. The vocabulary test has been statistically treated using (SPSS) system of analysis, to find out means and percentage.

Vocabulary Test

This section will represent the results obtained from the vocabulary test of Dongolese groups and non-Dongolese groups. Dongolese groups will be presented first.

3.1.4. The of vocabulary Test

According to the vocabulary test there are six words on the left side and four meanings on the right side, three of the meaning

are correct and one meaning is incorrect. One of the six words on the left side is an English word which has a different meaning in Dongolese language. The two meanings were provided (i.e. the meaning in English and the meaning in Dongolese). Students are asked to match the right words with its correct meaning and leaving the incorrect meaning empty. For instance, students were given in Question (B) in the vocabulary test six words, these words were (*television, radio. Cupboard, bed, chair and tea*). On the right side they were given four meanings? (*is used for sleeping on, drink, cow and a seat for one person*). The word tea(ti:) in Dongolese language means ‘cow’ and in English is something we drink, if the participants, response is towards the Dongolese meaning, in this case tea means ‘cow’ there will be interference, if not, there is no interference.

A sample consisting 200 subjects is collected, a hundred were collected from Dongolese and another hundred were collected from non-Dongolese. In Dongolese participants, 50 were males and 50 females, in non-Dongolese on the other hand, 50 males, and 50 females. The results obtained would be compared (Dongolese with non-Dongolese), all words that are used in vocabulary test are from the spine. The following is the result of the vocabulary test:

Dongolese Subjects

Table (4)

	Q b	Q c	q d	Q e	Q f	Q g	Q h	Q I
Incorrect	12	2	19	1	10	2	3	10
Correct	88	98	81	99	90	98	97	90
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Percentage %	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table (5)

	Q I	Q k	Q l	Q m	Q n	Q o	Q p	Q q
Incorrect	6	5	15	2	5	17	3	1
Correct	94	95	85	98	95	83	97	99
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Percentage %	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

As it is clear from table (I) which represent QB of the vocabulary test, 12% of the subjects have been answered incorrectly which corresponds to the meaning in Dongolese language , while 88% of the subjects correctly, which corresponds to the meaning in English language. As it is shown in question(c) 2% of the subjects have been answered incorrectly, while 98% of the subjects correctly. In question (d) 19% of the subjects have been answered incorrectly, while 81% correctly. In question (e) 1% of the subjects have been answered incorrectly while 99% have been answered correctly. From question (f) 10% of the subjects have been answered incorrectly, while 90% correctly. In question (g) as it shown 2% have been answered incorrectly, while 98% were not. Concerning question (h) 3% of the subjects have been answered incorrectly, while 97% of the subjects incorrectly. In question (i) 10% of the subjects have been answered incorrectly, while 90% correctly. In question (j) 6% have been answered incorrectly, while 94% correctly. In question (k) 5% have been answered incorrectly, while % 95 incorrectly. In question (l) 15% of the subjects have been answered incorrectly, while 85% correctly. As it is clear from question (m) 2% have been answered incorrectly, while 98% correctly. In question (n) 5% of the subjects have been answered incorrectly, while 95% correctly. From question (o) 17% of the subjects have been answered incorrectly, while 83% of the subjects correctly. In question (p) 3% of the subjects of the study have been answered incorrectly, while 97% of the subjects correctly. In the last question (q) among Dongolese groups 1% of the subject has been answered incorrectly, while 99% correctly.

3.1.5 Summary

As it is shown from the results above there are some questions in which Dongolese groups have been answered incorrectly, with a approximately high percent than other questions which is a sign of interference from the learners' mother tongue,

because when the learner answered incorrectly it corresponds with the meanings of the words in Dongolese language, and this obvious in tables (a), (c), (d), (i), (l) and (p) in addition, the words that were used in these questions were: 'tea' 'two' 'multi', 'or', 'tape' and 'well' respectively.

The following table shows the words that are used in the study, the ways Dongolese pronounced it and the meanings of these English words in Dongolese language; in addition, to the frequency of the answers by the subjects.

Table (6) Answers of the selected words by the subjects

Dongolese word	Dongolese Pronunciation	Meaning in Dongolese Language	Percentage
ti	/ti:/	Cow	12
Kam	/kaml/	Camel	2
Tu	/Tu:/	Stomach	19
Ni	/Ni:/	To drink	1
mlti	/multij/	Small channel	10
Bel	/bel/	Get out	2
Bri	/Beri/	To choose	3
Or	/:r/	The king	10
Oud	/d/	Getting colder	6
Tail	/Teil/	Warm	5
Taip	/Teip/	To standup	15
Dig	/Dig/	To connect	2
did	/did/	damnation	5
Kal	/Ka:l/	Alone	3
Wel	/Well/	A dog	17
msls	/Msls/	The sun	1

The percent shows the response by the subjects towards the meanings of the words in the Dongolese language for example in question (b) out of hundred 12 of the subjects answered 'tea' to mean 'cow' and 88 of the subjects answered it as a drink which corresponds to the meaning in English.

Non- Dongolese Subjects

Table (7)

	Q b	Q c	q d	Q e	Q f	Q g	Q h	Q I
Incorrect	1	15	4	7	5	5	11	5
Correct	99	85	96	93	95	95	89	95
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Percentage %	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table (8)

	Q l	Q k	Q l	Q m	Q n	Q o	Q p	Q q
Incorrect	8	9	10	7	11	12	10	7
Correct	92	91	90	93	89	88	90	93
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Percentage %	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Concerning non-Dongolese groups, as it is obvious in table (1I) which represents question (b) of the vocabulary test, 1% of non-Dongolese have been answered incorrectly ,(the meaning here corresponds with the meaning in Dongolese language), while 99% correctly(to corresponds with the meaning in English language).

In question (c) 15% of the subjects have been answered incorrectly, while 85% correctly. In question (d) 4% of the subjects have been answered incorrectly, while 96% correctly. From question (e) 7% of the subjects have been answered incorrectly, while 93% correctly. In question (f) 5% have been answered incorrectly, while 95% correctly. In question (g) the same as question (f). In question (h) 11% of the subjects from non-Dongolese groups have been answered incorrectly, while 89% correctly. In question (i) 5% of the subjects have been answered incorrectly, while 95% correctly. From the question (j) it is clear that 8% of the subjects have been answered incorrectly, while 92% correctly. In question (k) 9% have been answered incorrectly, while 91%correctly. From question (l) 10% of the subjects have been answered incorrectly, while 90% correctly. In question (m) 7% of the subjects have been answered incorrectly, while 93% correctly. In question (n) 11% have been answered incorrectly, while 89% correctly. In question (o) 12% of the subjects have been answered incorrectly, while 88% correctly. In question (p) 10% of the subjects have been answered incorrectly, while 90% correctly. In the last question (q) 7% of the subjects of the study have been answered incorrectly, while 93% correctly.

As it is shown from the results above, there are some questions in which non-Dongolese groups have been answered

incorrectly, which is a sign of interference not from their mother tongue language ,but from Dongolese language because the incorrect answers corresponds with the meanings in Dongolese language, and these questions were (c), (h), (l), (n), (o) and (p), moreover, the words that have been used in these question were: tables (5,6) '*come*' '*Bury*' '*tape*', '*did*', '*well*' and '*call*' respectively. The words '*tape*' and '*well*' show clear effects in both sides.

It is clear from the results above that the non-Dongolese subjects which are mainly Mahas, Halfawa and Skoud were affected by Dongolese language, these Nubians language are from the same origin and belong to the same language family which is Nilo-Saharan family in ,addition, there are many words shared between all these languages therefore interference is expected.

3.1.6. Correlations

The researcher hypothesis that females will be affected by interference more than males because, in NS communities girls are always in their home, and therefore the contact with the Dongolese language will be less compared with males who have the opportunity to use the language outside home more than females.

Tribe correlation

The researcher hypothesis that Dongolese groups will be affected by the interference more than non-Dongolese groups due to firstly, it is their mother tongue language and secondly, they use it in every day context.

In this section two comparisons will be made, the means and percentage has been provided in the appendix.

- Gender correlations.
- Tribe correlations.

3.1.7. Gender correlation

In this section the correlation between males and females among Dongolese language groups will be presented.

In question (B) as it was shown that the incorrect answers among males were 4% while 8% among females. In question (C) the incorrect answers among males were 2% and 0% for females. In question (D) the incorrect answers represent 2% among males, and 17% among females. In question (E) the incorrect answers show 0% for males and 1% among females. In question (F) it is obvious from the table that the incorrect answers were 10% for males and 0% for females. In question (G) the incorrect answers were 1% for males and 1% for females. In question (H) the incorrect answers were 3% for males subjects while 0% among females. In question (I) 11% males of the subjects have been answered incorrectly and 4% among females. In question (J) of vocabulary test the incorrect answers were 3% among males and 2% among females. In question (L) the incorrect answers were 11% for males and 4% for females. In question (M) the incorrect answers show 1% for males and 1% for females. In question (N) the incorrect answers were 5% for males and 0% for females. In question (P) the incorrect answers were 17% for males and 0% for females. In question (O) the incorrect answers were 3% among males and 0% among females. In question (Q) the incorrect answers were 1% for males and 0% for females.

Summary

As it is obvious from the result above, that males have been answered incorrectly more than females, therefore, they have been affected by interference more than females. This corresponds with the researcher hypothesis that the more you are in contact with a language the more you will be affected with it.

In the correlation between males and females among non-Dongolese groups, the researcher found that , roughly males

were affected by the interference from Dongolese language more than females however, the differences in percent between the two is not very high.

3.1.8. Tribe correlation

The second part of correlation is between Dongolese and non-Dongolese groups. In Dongolese groups as it appeared in question (B) of the vocabulary test, that 6% of Dongolese groups subjects have been answered incorrectly while, 1% among non-Dongolese. In question (C) 2% among Dongolese and 15% among non-Dongolese. In question (D) 19% among Dongolese and 4% among non-Dongolese. In question (E) 1% among Dongolese and 7% among non-Dongolese. In question (F) 10% of Dongolese have been answered incorrectly while 5% among non-Dongolese. In question (G) 2% among Dongolese and 5% among non-Dongolese. In question (H) 3% from Dongolese and 11% from non-Dongolese in question (I) shows 10% among Dongolese and 5% among non-Dongolese. In question (J) 6% of Dongolese and 8% of non-Dongolese. in question (K) 5% among Dongolese and 8% among non-Dongolese. In question (L) 15% among Dongolese and 10% among non-Dongolese. In question (M) 2% for Dongolese and 7% for non-Dongolese. In question (N) 5% among Dongolese, and 11% among non-Dongolese. In question (P) 17% among Dongolese and 12% among non-Dongolese. In question (O) 3% among Dongolese and 10% among non-Dongolese, and in the last question 1% of Dongolese group have been answered incorrectly while, 7% from non-Dongolese groups.

Summary

As it clear from the results above that the incorrect answers among Dongolese and non-Dongolese was approximately the same, but the percentage among Dongolese was higher, it is corresponds with the researcher hypothesis. However, there are some questions in which Dongolese groups showed a clear effect

from their mother tongue, these questions are (B), (D), (F), (L) and (P) representing the following words as it was appeared in vocabulary test '*tea*', '*two*' '*Essay*', '*tape*' and '*well*' respectively.

Although the incorrect answers has happened in both language groups (Dongolese and non-Dongolese), this indicates that living in the same region or area has the same effect among the speakers who speak a particular language and the speaker who do not speak it. On the other hand, although these English words that were used in the vocabulary test having the same sound in Dongolese language but different in meanings, it is difficult to determine when the participant mismatch (un able to use an English word that are pronounced as a Dongolese word but with different meaning) whether it is due to the subjects are un able to relate these word to English or the subjects are able to relate it to Dongolese, on the other hand, when the subjects match(use the English words in it is correct meanings) we do not know whether is it due lack of knowledge of Dongolese language or the subjects are un able to relate these words to Dongolese the third option is that the subjects are competent in these English words. The words '*tea*', '*two*' '*Essay*', '*tape*' and '*well*' are everyday life words, and very frequently used among Dongolese groups and therefore effect from these words is much greater.

3.1.9. Recommendations

The following are the recommendations the researcher has made:

1. Syllabus designer should bear in their minds the nature of local languages in Sudan when designing the syllabus.
2. Dongolese language should be used as a media of instruction especially at basic level.
3. Students should be encouraged in whatever situations to use their mother tongue language.

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