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Abstract

Recognition of multi-word sequences in English lexicons, by Arabic mother-tongue English speakers, is studied in this paper. An investigation of how non-native English speakers comprehend and use multi-words in their non-native language (English). In addition, a comparison between figurative and literal uses of the same items has been made. Whether learners of English, from any background, in general, and from an Arabic mother-tongue, in particular are capable of understanding the compositional/non-compositional meanings of everyday English multi-word sequences is investigated, here. This is done in order to see how .Arabic mother-tongue speakers were able to process non-compositional meaning in English This research is conducted by analyzing how high proficiency groups whom are Ara-

bic-English bilinguals process non-compositional meaning of English multi-word sequences. Multi-words at multiple levels of representation, are studied, encompassing lexical, structural and conceptual properties of word combinations. All this leading, to the results that Arabic mother-tongue learners of English, as well as other non-natives English learners, are incapable of recognizing non-compositional meaning of multi-words. Thus, non-counterpart to native English speakers, who use them daily and understand their compositional/non-compositional meaning very easily

This study compares between literal and non-literal uses of the same language items.

Multi-word sequences and the compositional and non-compositional meanings of them are studied, within this paper. This is achieved to assess how English language learners, from an Arabic background, understand non-compositional meaning. This shows that Arabic mother-tongue speakers of English different degree levels of English show fundamentally different processing in their L2 than native English speakers. Multi-word combinations are processed quickly by natives and very easily, regardless of the multi-word sequence used. Compared; however, to non-natives of English whom are Arabic-English bilinguals, show more variable and weak processing of multi-word forms. Therefore, it is reached, in this study, that recognition of compositional/non-compositional meanings of common and existing English multi-.words differs between natives and non-natives

Keywords: non-compositional meaning, formulaic language

الملخص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة التركيبات اللغوية ومعاني المفردات ذات الصيغ التشكيلية ومدى إدراك متعلمي اللغة الإنكليزية لمعانيها الخاصة. قدرة متعلمي الإنكليزية للمعاني المقصودة لهذه التركيبات

بِجَابَالتَجَانِي النَّوَاتِي النَّجَوَضِيَةِ الْإِنْتَيْنَ العدد التاسع



اللغوية والمفردات الخاصة هو في عمق علم اللغة التداولي ولذا يهدف الباحث من خلال علم اللغة التداولي في الوصول إلى مدى إدراك الناطقين للغة الانكليزية من غير الناطقين بها كلغة أولى بشكل عام والناطقين بها من العرب بشكل خاص لهذه الصيغ التشكيلية.

يهدف الباحث في هذه الدراسة الى مقارنة ودراسة مدى قدرة الناطقين باللغة الإنكليزية ممن لغتهم الأولى أو لغتهم الأم هي العربية بشكل خاص على معرفة المعاني التركيبية وغير التركيبية للمفردات ذات المعاني المتعددة الدارجة بكثرة باللغة الإنكليزية. يقوم الباحث هنا بتحليل المعاني التداولية للمفردات لمعرفة مدى إدراك وإجادة متعلمي اللغة الإنكليزية من غير الناطقين بها كلغة أولى للمعاني التركيبة وغير التركيبة والمقارنة بين قدرة متعلمي الإنكليزية على التمييز بين المعنى الحرفي والمقصودة لهذه الفردات المركبة وصيغها التشكيلية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: صيغ التشكيل، المعنى غير المركب

Introduction

Before "claiming the floor", pragmatically speaking, that is, it must be made clear that, within linguistic inquiry, it has been found that certain word combinations in the English language, are processed quickly by native speakers, but are problematic for non-native speakers even at high levels of proficiency of English.

Comprehending and recognizing the non-compositional meaning of English language items is necessary to speaker fluency, social and discourse functions. (Van Lancker Sidtis, 2012). Also, understanding non-compositional meaning is important in the linguistic field of pragmatics. Pragmatics has to do with the realization of utterance and speaker meaning. (Huang, 2014).

How do non-native English speakers process English multi-words in their non-native language? How do English Students explore and recognize the representation of multi-word sequences in the bilingual lexicons. By comparing between figurative and literal uses of the same language items, this study has reached to the conclusion that it is indeed difficult for non-native speakers to process non-compositional meaning in English as a non-native language.

Literature Review

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The study of multi-words and their non-compositional meaning has become a very important part of the study of pragmatics which deals with speaker intended meaning. As well as what is has to do with the lexical semantic system, language studies and of second language acquisition.

First of all, it is important to explain the meaning of compositionality and noncompositionality. It is also important to make clear the differences between multi-words that carry non-compositional meaning. A phrasal verb, for starter, refers to 'a verb' and 'a particle'. A particle is either an adverb or a preposition or both. Sometimes, a phrasal verb may contain two particles and not just one, such as "put up with", "look forward to" and "catch up with". Common phrasal verbs, for instance, include "get up", "deal with" and "turn off". (McCarthy & O'Dell, 2004) An idiom is fixed and is a natively recognized feature of the English language. Idioms carry non-literal and metaphorical meaning. Thus, they carry a non-compositional meaning that is figurative in nature. For example, the idiom "up to his eyes" carries the non-compositional meaning "very busy". Also, "At the meeting, John felt that he was out of his depth" meaning, noncompositionally, that he was in a situation which he did not understand for some reason. (Wright, 1999) A collocation is a "predictable combination of words". For example, one can use the words "heavy rain" joined together but not "strong" and "rain" as in the incorrect combination "strong rain". But it is correct to say "strong coffee". Another collocation is "do exercise" and not "make exercise".

<http://www.englishpath.com>. binomials, such as (king and queen), compound nouns as in (teddy bear), lexical bundles or chunks like (in the middle of) are all considered types and examples of formulaic language expressions. (Erman & Warren, 2000)

According to Van Lancker Sidtis (2012), non-compositional meaning comes with formulaic language. The use of formulaic language in English communication is a necessity. In linguistic studies, non-compositional meaning of English expressions and vocabulary is said to add flavor to communication and speech. Thus, learning non-compositional meaning of certain English expressions is necessary in order to



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achieve native-like English language communication. Nevertheless, learning the non-compositional meaning of expressions and the proper use of them is not as easy as one might think. English language learners, especially Arabs, lack the ability to communicate properly and efficiently because of their inability to arrive at the non-compositional meaning of most of the daily-used formulaic language expressions. The non-compositional meaning of language expressions refers to the non-literal meaning of multi-word sequences or multi-word expressions that are common in everyday language. (Ellis, 1994). According to the multi-words' distribution and processing accounts, these sequences are either compositional, such as lexical bundles and collocations or are non-compositional, such as idioms and phrasal verbs.

Proper comprehension and use of non-compositional sequences, among non-native English speakers and learners is poor and underprovided. Thus, nonparallel to native counterparts, reaching non-compositional meaning of such expressions is difficult for English language learners of a non-native English origin. Reaching non-compositional meaning of English expressions, such as idioms and phrasal verbs is not easy. This is because these expressions carry a specific meaning that cannot be referred to by analyzing the meaning of its constituent words. It is difficult for Arabs, specifically, to reach the non-compositional meaning of such expressions because we do not find such expressions in the Arabic language. (Ibid)

Nevertheless, arriving at the non-compositional meaning of regularly used expressions in English is a vital part of the English vocabulary. Arriving at non-compositional meaning of such language items is considered a basic part of this language's lexicon, history, heritage and culture. Non-compositional meaning of vocabulary items in English is important in English verbal communication, because English native speakers use such meanings when they communicate on a daily basis.

However, most English language learners, especially Arabic mother-tongue speakers find arriving at the non-compositional meaning uneasy and sometimes extremely difficult, unlike native English speakers, who use them subconsciously on a daily basis

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and in everyday communication. Despite this, however, ESL/EFL environments pay very little attention to such an important feature of the English language and necessary part of everyday vocabulary understanding.

This research suggests reasons why these linguistic expressions are lacking in nonnative English communication, dissimilar to native English communication. Possible reasons behind the nonexistence of proper comprehension and use of such language items, are explained within this paper. Listing explanations on why learners of English face difficulties in the ability to comprehend the non-compositional meaning of daily used language lexicon. It is intended, within this paper, to stress the need for an aptitude to communicate confidently using expressions which carry non-compositional meanings, such as idioms, phrasal verbs, collocations and other parts of the English language lexicon. Here, suggestions have been given in the hope of arriving at a clear analysis of the causes of such a problem and possible solutions to overcome stated difficulties.

Non-compositional meaning of daily used English language expressions and vocabulary has become an important issue in modern linguistics, specifically in the modern linguistic field of pragmatics. In recent years the study of the non-compositional meaning of English language expressions has noticeably grown (Conklin & Schmitt, 2008)

According to linguists, non-compositional meaning is processed more quickly by native speakers than non-natives. Also, according to linguistic studies, non-compositional meaning is processed more quickly than other sequences of words and quicker than novel language. (Tabossi, et al., 2009). Despite this evidence, research into non-native speakers processing ability of the non-compositional meaning of English language items used daily in English suggests that fast processing of these language items is absent, even at high levels of English proficiency. (Conklin & Schmitt, 2011).

It is known in linguistics studies that there are different types of formulaic language items. We have for instance idioms, binomials, and collocations. Are these formulaic languages different in terms of the way they are processed and interpreted. I.e., are

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they all similar to each other in that the non-native speaker is incapable of guessing their figurative meaning or is each of them different. It is clear in studies earlier to this, that non-native speakers of English are incapable of interpreting the meaning of idioms similar to natives, Arabic mother-tongue speakers, also.

So what about other formulaic language items (binomials, collocations) besides idioms. Do natives and non-natives act the same in terms of their ability to understand and figure out the meanings of these formulaic language items? Or does being a non-native speakers of English have the same impact on the learners' ability to guess meaning, as with idioms, phrasal verbs, collocations, etc. There has been very limited study regarding formulaic language and thus, here, within this study it is aimed to assess and investigate such issues worthy of notice.

According to Van Lancker Sidtis (2012) formulaic expressions are different from other utterances due to the fact that they are not newly created. According to formulaic language it can be exemplified by the frequency-based approach. This approach makes it clear that frequency abundantly effects language. That is, high frequency is made clear to define features of formulaic language and that multi-word units are made facilitative due to the effect of frequency in word recognition and processing. So, whether we are speaking of single words or multi word units, such as formulaic language, the more frequent the language items used, the more easily and faster they are recognized and processed. (Forster & Chambers, 1973) However, it is noteworthy to mention that frequency in multi-word units is found to be much lower than it is amid single words. (Jurafsky, 2003)

Being knowledgeable of compositional/ non-compositional meaning of formulaic language, supports in effectively conveying of messages. So, pragmatically speaking, being 'king and queen' of your English. Recognizing the meaning of such sequences allows language users to meet physical and emotional needs and preserve oneself as a group member and as an individual. It is a way of acquiring language as it is used within a language community and thus differentiating native speakers from nonnative speakers. Native ability to speak in a certain language requires not just the

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knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary of a language but also requires the mastery of recognizing, understanding and usage of language where one becomes capable of mastering words that are joined and combined in a complex way. Which will, in turn, lead to better and more improved forms of communication and interaction.

It is important to consider and be aware of when it comes to compositional/noncompositional language reading, word-by-word analysis is very likely to give an incorrect meaning. The non-compositional meaning of (kick the bucket) cannot be arrived at by an analysis of its compositional words. A word-by-word interpretation of the idiom's compositional words would lead to an inaccurate meaning of the idiomatic expression, which actually carries the meaning "pass away" or "die" as an unanalyzable whole. (Wray & Perkins: 2000)

The way to tackle multi-words and their non-compositional meaning is to become familiar with them. So, non-native speakers of English have to become acquainted with formulaic language items and their non-compositional meaning. They have to learn them deliberately. That is, they have to learn the compositional and non-compositional meaning of these words one by one, literally speaking. This is, because, pragmatically speaking, they are tailored that way! (Ibid)

Cieslicka (2002) considers compositional/ non-compositional meaning of multiwords, as one of the hardest items of a language to learn and that they are a real challenge for non-natives of a language because they are, for one, a vital part of nativelike competence, as well as one of the most difficult language aspects to master. Yet, formulaic language is a vital part on native language both formal or informal. Surely, thus, a problem arises, in English language learning, whether attempted by Arabic mother-tongue speakers or other English language learners, from other language origins. This usually yields to a gap in English language learning.

The non-compositional meaning must be deliberately learnt and as one whole unit. The non-compositional meaning of these daily used multi-word expressions are not to be inferred by analyzing the meaning of its words separately. For example, the

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phrasal verb "look up" is composed of the verb "look" which means "to see" and the particle "up" which is the opposite of "down". As one can see, the phrasal verb "look up" carries a non-compositional meaning, as one whole unit and not as separable words. "Look up" may mean "search for information" as in the sentence "I will look up for the meaning of this word in a dictionary". "Look up" may also mean "visiting a person you have not visited for a long time" as in the example "I will look her up next time I am in Jordan". "Look up" as a phrasal verb may have a third different non-compositional meaning which differs according to the context it is used in. This phrasal verb also, for instance, means that "things are improving" as when saying "things seem to be looking up" carrying a meaning which is "things seem to be getting better." (McCarthy & O'Dell, 2004)

Notwithstanding, most learners of English, specifically Arabic mother-tongue speakers, lack the ability to both understand and use multi-words which carry non-compositional meanings. This, in turn, distinguishes English language learners, or simply speaking, non-natives of English from native English speakers. While, natives of English, are found to comprehend compositional and the non-compositional meanings and process them quickly, plentifully, daily and spontaneously. (Jurafsky, 2003)

Knowing a language is knowing all of it morphemes, multi-words and their compositional and non-compositional meaning. (Fromkin et al., 2003) Compositional and non-compositional multi-words are used in both written and spoken English and are part of everyday native vocabulary, which English learners should be familiar with. So, for instance, we can say "I really want to ask Sarah out" and not "ask my cat out" which is illogical and incorrect. Where "ask somebody out" or "ask out somebody" as in the sentence "I really want to ask Sarah out" carries a non-literal meaning "ask out for a date" and not "out" as the opposite of "inside". Here, as one can see, non-compositional meaning refers to meaning which is not ordinary. It is a meaning that is not predictable. We can say that multi-word sequences which carry compositional

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and non-compositional meaning refer to idioms, phrasal verbs, and collocations, etc. which carry their own special meaning. (McCarthy & O'Dell, 2004)

Methodology

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A qualitative approach has been followed in this paper through the study of previous case studies, and accomplished researches. Analysis, within this paper, has depended on the examination of pre-existing data, as well as through a thorough comparison between studies concerned with comparisons made between non-native English speakers and native English speakers regarding language items, such as idioms, phrasal verbs, collocations, and compounds and other multi-word forms. Certain cases, within this paper, has been based on Contrastive linguistic studies between Arabic mothertongue speakers of English. As thus, Contrastive Analysis theories have been adopted. This research study is conducted by analyzing multi-words combinations which carry a compositional/non-compositional meaning. Formulaic language at multiple levels of representation, encompassing lexical, structural and conceptual properties of word combinations were analyzed within this study and compared. Also, by analyzing previous research studies on how high proficiency groups, who are bilinguals in English, process non-compositional meaning of English multi-word sequences, results were reached.

This study was reached by the application of dual route model to explain how language learners process written words through two distinct routes, the lexical route and the non-lexical route. As well the researcher followed a cross-cultural contrastive linguistic analysis. Mostly contrasting Arabic mother tongue learners of English with native English speakers. In addition, studies concerning other English language learners from other mother-tongue speakers, such as Chinese first language English speakers were compared and contrasted with studies concerning Arabic mothertongue speakers of English. Non-natives of English showed types of comprehension difficulties with regard to formulaic language used in English. By examining countable research studies, evidence revealed different factors all leading to relevant processing

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inability of English bilinguals. Whether difficulties in processing, comprehending or actual use and communication, using formulaic language, non-compositional meaning was a "hard bargain", pragmatically speaking, that is. Case studies, within this research paper, all lead to negativity on the part of the learner with regard to multiword sequences carrying non-compositional meaning. Separate research studies were analyzed, contrasted and compared in separated contexts. Different factors to a wide number of formulaic types showed relevant results, such as negative transfer from the learners' mother-tongue. Also, learners using translation as a strategy to overcome inadequate knowledge of formulaic sequences. Mostly, though there was evidence of mother-tongue interference. Importantly, different factors with regard to formulaic reveal processing difficulties on the part of the learner with regard to multi-words and formulaic language use.

Discussion and Results

Pragmatically speaking, learners of English should be willing "to give and arm and a leg" to be appropriately knowledgeable of compositional and non-compositional multi-word expressions. But why is this?! Why are non-native English speakers lacking the ability to learn, comprehend and use non-compositional expressions adequately, counterpart to natives of English. It can be suggested, going back to earlier studies, that English language learning environments and settings makes it hard for English language learners to process the compositional/non-compositional meaning of multi-word sequences. Non-compositional meaning of multi-word sequences, despite being essential in everyday English language communication, are not included in most English language learning environments, and are unenclosed in most English language learning books and materials that are used for teaching English as a second/foreign language in the Arab world and around the world.

Whether learners of English are taught in schools, colleges, universities or taught elsewhere, previous study in this area shows that there is a clear advantage of participants selecting literal meaning of the formulaic sequences over non-compositional meaning. The difficulty that comes with the use of formulaic language is from the fact that their

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meaning is opaque and their meaning is hard to deduce without some prior knowledge. Thus, studying non-native speakers acquisition and learning of formulaic language should be a non-defeasible goal of modern research in linguistics and other branches in language research studies. (Conklin, & Schmitt, 2008) This research study supports previous studies regarding formulaic language such as Conklin and Schmitt (2011) with the main idea being that non-native speakers show more tendency to interpret formulaic combinations with a literal meaning. This study also suggests that non-natives tend to go back to their L1 or mother-tongue translations when attempting to consider the meaning of the formulaic combinations.

It was found, within this research, that the first language plays a role in English learners' ability to interpret non-compositional meanings. This study reveals that the English learners first language and how its words are joined together helps in reaching the meaning of certain items in a language.

Arabic-English bilinguals, Chinese-English bilinguals as well as other English language learners have shown, according to previous research, an inability to retrieve non-compositional meaning of English formulaic language. This study suggests that learning formulaic language, is by exposure to it. Translating, or paraphrasing of expressions which hold a non-compositional meaning, will not always be suffice and which may "do more harm than good", pragmatically speaking, for another round.

Improving your English proficiency of formulaic language sequences will indeed improve your English, but it is by exposure to native English speakers and native speaking conditions that will assist English leaners' improvement regarding their knowledge and use of formulaic language. By exposure to more English multi-word sequences, such as the many stated above, learners are thus adjusting themselves to sounding more native-like. Exposure to native English, whether through mixing with natives or being exposed to native English through spending more hours listening and reading of materials put forward by native English speakers is best suggested, here. The more English learners are exposed to native English, the better. The more mixing with native language communication, the more proficient you are likely to be, and the

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more native-like you are to sound. Thus, it all has to do with these conditions. So, whether deliberately choosing to be common and familiar, any knowledge in this regard, is to be fine-grained. All of such should indeed lead to better English learning responses on part of the learner. So, what it considered significant, with regard to formulaic forms, is simply the status as known or unknown that drives the advantage. Therefore, expressions that carry non-compositional meaning (e.g. ask out) that are frequently used in English should be taught the most, so for instance multi-words that come about while watching T.V. programs, listening to music, reading books, surfing the internet and so on, ought to be taught to English students and learners. Listening and speaking courses, should include the most frequently used of these expressions and multi-word sequences which carry non-compositional meaning. These daily used multi-word words carrying non-compositional, figurative, or non-ordinary meaning should be taught as a part of the everyday English vocabulary and lexicon. To sum up, it all has to do with practice.

Conclusions

To conclude, formulaic language is used on a daily basis by native English speakers, unlike non-native English speakers who lack comprehension and communication using this essential and important communication skill.

This study has shown that non-native speakers of English, show fundamentally different processing in their L2 than native English speakers of these multi-word combinations. Formulaic language is found to be processed quickly by natives and very easily, regardless of the multi-word sequence used and despite their compositional or noncompositional meanings they carry. Compared; however, to non-natives of English whom are Arabic-English bilinguals, processing of multi-word forms, is more variable in whether or not the component words also show lexical priming. Therefore, it is reached, in this study, that recognition of compositional/non-compositional meanings of common and existing English multi-words differs between natives and non-natives

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of English.

Non-compositional meaning of English language items differs in terms of the way they are processed and interpreted. These language items are all similar to each other in that the non-native speaker is incapable of guessing their non-compositional meaning and each of them is different. One thing clear, in studies earlier to this, is that non-native speakers of English are incapable of interpreting non-compositional meaning.

If one wants to process the English language more native-like, as well as sound more native-like s/he must become familiar with commonly-used formulaic language and deliberately become acquainted with them. This could be done by one-by-one exposure to such linguistic lexicon and by deliberate and intended exposure to native communication. Being familiar with natives and native English communication makes these essential multi-words more easily acquired. Exposure to native language makes it more simple for non-native English language learners to understand and thoroughly use non-compositional expressions.

Pragmatically speaking, formulaic language and these multi-word sequences are the king and queen of the English language. You cannot do without! Literally speaking, Practice means practice. The more, the better.

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