

Chapter 88

Learning Arabic Through Language of Journalism

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ABSTRACT

Second language learning requires more than memorizing rules and vocabulary detached from contexts. Language teachers have to encourage the exposure to real context to enable their students to ‘acquire’ the language in the same way they acquire their first language. This could entail an unconscious induction called ‘analogy’. Analogy may enable language learners to create neologisms for the purpose of communicating. This could also enable them to obtain a better understanding of lexical items in context. This chapter highlights the benefits of direct exposure to neologisms in journalistic texts, which influences learners’ morphological choice. Mass media in general and journalism in particular are thought to be a perfect means of learning any language in its natural context.

INTRODUCTION

It has been well established fact that language learning can not be fruitful unless it takes place within real contexts. Contexts, whether linguistic or physical, play an important role in both language learning and language understanding. Second language learning experts (Gass, 2012; Long, 1996; Mackey, 2007) encourage the creation of situations that simulate those real contexts for students to ‘acquire’ a second language in the same way they acquire their first language. Inductive learning processes are reinforced to acquire a basic set of skills from rules that are already built in students’ minds. That is, unconscious analysis of linguistic input is motivated for a better production of a well-formed output. This process is known as ‘analogy’ or creation of new forms in comparison with already existing forms. This, according to linguists, is very important. Bateson (2003), for instance, claims that the analogy “...is one of the chief methods of vocabulary development in natural evolution” (p. 87).

Enriching learners’ vocabulary has long been the target of second language learners as it is considered the most important means for his/her target that is ‘communicating with others’. Wilkins (1972) asserts that “without grammar, very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed”

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7663-1.ch088

(p.111). This suggests the importance of vocabulary knowledge as an essential element of language learning. Vocabulary enables learners to deal with various communicative situations through their exposure to language learning. Building up a learner's vocabulary must be accompanied by the study of the morphological rules of the second language. Successful vocabulary learning is directly based on the strategies adopted in learning how lexical items are formed.

It has long been asked why Arabic is a difficult language for non-natives. Similar questions have been raised about the possibility of simplifying the process of learning to make it easier for non-Arabs to learn the language especially with an increasing number of individuals interested in Arabic. In this regard, Arab Media, especially that of journalism, has been considered a resort for language learners. Angheliescu (2012) supports this trend stating that "students learning Arabic focus on literature and journalism texts, where Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is in full effect" (p. 118). This highlights the usefulness of media language in teaching Arabic. Similarly, Versteegh (2006) stresses the importance of studying the language of journalism, which is, according to him, "a useful language learning tool" (p. XX).

Traditional means of Arabic language teaching have long been abandoned and the existence of dictionaries for language teaching have become less practical. Thus, it can be argued that studying the language of journalism and extracting authentic texts from such kinds of discourse can replace outdated curricula so as to emphasize the communicative importance in language teaching. These authentic texts, in addition to their empirical description and analysis, are essential in language teaching. Versteegh (2006) asserts that "until empirical data are provided about the true nature of interactive discourse, specialists will continue to disagree on basics. Research in Arabic discourse analysis is, thus, number one priority for the field" (p. 18).

To achieve its intent, this chapter attempts to provide a comprehensive overview about analogy as an induction process used in the creation of neologism. The chapter discusses the reasons why learners need to learn Arabic word formations processes. The chapter also emphasizes the ways in which culture intermingles with language learning, stressing the impact of media language and its authentic texts on language learners.

BACKGROUND

Learning Arabic as a second language is not detached from learning theories. There is an approach that resembles the unconscious process of induction, which is called 'analogy'. Arab linguists stress the importance of analogy in creating new formations (Sai'd, 1967; Shaheen, 1980; Abd Al-Azeez, 1995). There is no doubt that modern Arab linguists benefit from both the classical Arab and western approaches of analogy. Arab linguists consider analogy as a main source of developing the lexicon of the Arabic language. It has become the most debatable and controversial issue in the field of modern Arabic linguistics. The process lends itself to comparing the 'non-ruled to what has been 'rule-governed'. Anees (1967) points to the importance of analogy as a process and means of coining the new words required in the Arabic linguistic community. Anees (1967) proposes two implications for analogy:

First: it is that which is apparently preconceived of by the late grammarians of the first and second century of Hijra. Those grammarians were the main inheritants of the Arabic language, its structure, texts and lexicon. They were the first to hear it saidThus, they stood still for what they had, never trying to go beyond what is codified.

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