

Chapter One

Introduction

1.0 Background of the Study

While there is some agreement among linguists about the acquisition of one's own language, still there is no such agreement on the acquisition of a second language . No one can say with any certain how a second language is acquired . Nevertheless, psychologists have proposed different theories of language learning and language behavior. In addition, linguists have offered theories of the description of languages and their acquisition. Since people learn in different ways and different rates, it is important that the teacher knows and uses information from linguistics, psychology and other related sciences. Learning a new language needs as much language support as possible. Those who have taught students learning English as their second language know that any language support is helpful for their language acquisition . English language students need a variety of language experience. The history of foreign language learning and teaching often appears to have been a history of failure . Not many students of foreign language can say with confidence that they have attained full bilingual proficiency (Kara , 1992).

The failure of foreign learning programs is very embarrassing to the teachers; it demonstrates the language acquisition remains a most unresolved aspect of language theory. New methods and material for language teaching are continually' advertised as the best and the only solution for this area of instruction. The major language acquisition controversy items form the contradiction between the rationalists and the empiricist's theories. Both of these theoretical attitudes have

long histories and many different methods of language teaching which try to apply their views about what language is and how it is learned (ibid).

Adjectives do not institute a well-defined word class in English since they have some correlations with other parts of speech, particularly nouns and adverbs. For this reason, the major school of grammar treated adjectives in different ways. The traditional grammarians based their definition to the adjective on the function it serves, i.e. modification . Mitchel (1931:61), for example, defines the adjective as "A word that modifies the meaning of a substantive". The structuralists concentrate mainly on form and structure as a basis for their classification of the adjectives Palmer. (1938:82) states that "adjectives may be defined as qualifiers of nouns ; that is to say they describe and indicate the person or thing denoted by the noun". The transformationalists, in treating adjective, oncentrate mainly on syntax and semantics. Thomas (1965: 152) defines an adjective as "any word which is an expansion of English grammatical category Adjectives in English grammar, or a transformational replacement of such a word ".

English is the only foreign language taught in Libya at secondary level recently. This language enjoys an important position as a result of the use of English in business, overseas travel, and science and technology. English is the main language of instruction in many Libyan colleges and universities.

In Libyan formal education, the teaching of English starts in the fifth year of the basic Education, i.e. at the age of about ten. At this stage, English is taught for three periods per week. The duration of each period is forty five minutes.

It has been observed that a number of Libyan learners of English have problems in using adjectives and adverbs. For

example, some students use adjectives after nouns. They also insert "-ly" to the end of adjectives to form adverbs.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

As a teacher of English language for many years , the researcher has observed that secondary school students in Zawia make errors when they use adjectives and adverbs in English.

Secondary school students in Libya make mistakes when they use adjectives in English. For instance, a student may say house big. Here, the student omits the auxiliary verb "Be" because there are no auxiliaries in equivalent in Arabic or the house big instead of the big house. The students in secondary school in Libya also make mistakes when they use adverbs in English. For example, they confuse between adjectives and adverbs. Most adverbs in English end with "-ly" at the same time there are some adjectives which end with "-ly" such as friendly, and silly. The other problem is that, students in secondary school in Libya confuse between adjectives and adverbs which have the same form such as fast and hard.

This study aims to investigate how Libyan secondary school students use adjectives and adverbs, the difficulties these students may confront and the possible and probable causes of the difficulties the students face in using adjectives and adverbs.

1.2 Research Questions

The present study addresses the following questions:

1. What are the types of adjectives and adverbs errors made by Libyan secondary school students?
2. What are the factors behind these errors?
3. How far what extent are English adjectives and adverbs included in Libyan secondary school textbooks?
4. To what extent do teachers of English give attention to the importance of English adjectives and adverbs when they teach?

1.3 Hypotheses of Study:

The researcher hypothesizes that:

1. Secondary school students in Libya make errors in adjectives/adverbs such as using adjectives after nouns or adding "-ly" to adjectives to form all types of adverbs.
2. The reasons behind these errors could be the influence of learner's mother tongue sentences structure or over-generalization.
3. English adjectives and adverbs are not effectively presented in the textbooks in Libya.
4. Teachers of English in Libyan secondary schools do not give enough emphasis to English adjectives and adverbs in their classrooms.

1.4 The Objectives of the Study

1. To find out how students in third year secondary schools in Libya use adjectives and adverbs in English .
2. To find out the factors behind the errors made Libyan secondary school students.
3. To investigate how teachers explain adjectives and adverbs in English .
4. To find out to what extent secondary school textbooks adequately explain adjectives and adverbs in English.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is important in the field of teaching and learning English because it deals with two important parts of speech; adjectives and adverbs. It will investigate the difficulty of using adjectives and adverbs by second language learners . Hence, they will know the differences and similarities between adjectives and adverbs in English. The study is also important for the following reasons:

1. The teachers will be provided with methods of teaching that help them in teaching English.
2. They will also know the differences and similarities between adjectives in English and Arabic and the differences and similarities between adverbs in English and Arabic.
3. It will help the teachers of secondary schools to teach more effectively .
4. This study is not only important for teachers and students, but also for textbook-writers, test designers and translators.

1.6 Methodology:

The methodology of this study is that, a test that investigates the use of adjectives and adverbs by Libyan secondary school students will be administered, a questionnaire to the teachers who teach English language at secondary stage and textbook analysis. Content of three textbooks, features of adjectives and adverbs .

1.7 Limits of the Study

This study is limited to the Libyan secondary school students in Zawia in 2014.