Understanding the sociolinguistic variation in EFL among Arab siblings

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Abstract

This study investigated the various linguistic, psychological, and sociocultural variables that explain the sociolinguistic variation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) among Arab siblings. The variables are not predetermined but extracted from the participants' contributions and data in a grounded theory research. The siblings participated in this study (N=15) are university undergraduates, who are educated in the UAE schools. While all human beings are empowered with the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) proposed by Chomsky, this does not explain the sociolinguistic variation among people and siblings in particular in using the language. The innate ability is not also evidence that siblings will have similar proficiency levels. The discourse analysis showed noticeable sociolinguistic variation among siblings in terms of language accuracy & fluency, L1 interference, spontaneity, and automaticity of speech. Some of these siblings have equal opportunities for improving their English; however, the analysis showed that some affective variables influence the development of their proficiency levels. The thematic analysis signaled three variables namely exposure to quality input and interaction opportunities, provision of quality education, and autonomy and independent activities. Eight of the fifteen participants attributed their deficiency in English to the inefficiency of the education system that did not facilitate sufficient exposure to linguistic input. Autonomy and independence proved to be effectual in creating the variation among siblings as well. This study sheds light on the significance of contextual factors in influencing proficiency levels among EFL learners in the UAE. The implications and recommendations of research findings are discussed.

1. Introduction

Many educators have extensively studied the development of EFL in different contexts in parallel with investigating the potential factors that influence having remarkable fluency in English language. Recent research driven by either positivist or constructivist underpinnings attribute progress in language acquisition to different perspectives. In support of the cognitive perception, Chomsky (1981) argues that the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) accounts for the innate ability all human beings have and are

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empowered with inborn capacity to be bilinguals or multilingual individuals. However, Halliday (1986) argues that acquisition of a new language does not occur simply because of having this inborn capacity. Language development is a complex process influenced by many interrelated individual, physical and affective factors. How the new language is presented to individuals was Vygotsky's (1978) concern. He outlined that actual learning occurs in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which slightly reaches beyond the current linguistic level of individuals. While these theories have helped to explain how language acquisition takes place, there is still a gap in understanding the variation in the acquisition of English as a lingua franca among siblings particularly in Arab contexts. This research study investigates this issue to understand what contributes to the variation between siblings and sibling groups, and the extent to which the context of EFL learning can be enhanced to improve language acquisition. This cognitive perspective provides insights for educators into how the linguistic context can be promoted for enhancing the proficiency levels of learners in English as an additional language.

1.1. Literature review

Early research relevant to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and the development of bilingual and multilingual learners witnessed much debate during the last decades (Ehrman, 1996; Ellis, 1997; Krashen, 1985; Oxford, 1999; Lemetyinen, 2012; and Lightbown and Spada, 2001). Understanding the factors influencing the acquisition of a native-like fluency in a Second Language (L2) is still enigmatic and attracted the attention of psycholinguistics for ages. The argument of Pavlov and Skinner (1957) and Ingram (1989) that language develops through positive reinforcement, imitation, repetition, and habit formation was heavily criticized by proponents of innatism. They believed that language is not a habit structure that simply develops through repetition and incentives. Additionally, language errors are indicative that language learners do not necessarily produce the language the same way they acquire it. In support of the cognitive perspective, Chomsky (1981) believed that humans are the only organism capable of learning languages, for they have the instinct and innate biological facility necessary for language acquisition, which he later named as the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) or the Universal Grammar (UG) or imaginary "Black Box" (ibid: 71). Once the LAD is triggered at the appropriate time, an individual can be bilingual or multilingual. From constructivist viewpoint, Piaget (1953) and Vygotsky (1978) did not attribute the existence of the LAD to the inevitability of language development. Instead, they prioritized the social factors and emphasized the interrelation between environment and language development. For Vygotsky, real language is that which children have acquired through physical interaction with the environment and potential artefacts. Hence, the level of interaction is a key element that makes the variation among individuals (Al Ghazali, 2006). Language learners do not have equal opportunities of interaction in the context in which they are living; the social milieu is an influential factor as well.

Conversely, Krashen (1981) focused on Comprehensible Input (CI) arguing that language should be presented in an authentic context to facilitate acquiring and retrieving it in similar situations. Likewise, Swain (1985) supported Comprehensible Output (CO) arguing that authentic situations should be created for an L2 to live and breathe. Tailored and artificial situations developed for formal instruction can be effective for short retention rates, yet they cannot create permanent knowledge or promote acquisition of native-like proficiency in the target language. Understanding the theories underlying SLA is necessary; however, few studies have been conducted to investigate why siblings who share similar familial and social conditions and empowered with an innate facility (LAD) sometimes develop in an L2 at different rates. Is this attributed to the levels of exposure and interaction with users of an L2 or ascribed to individual differences and personal interests?

The extensive research on the individual differences affecting SLA (Donato and Mccormick, 1994; Dörnyei, 2001; Gardner et al, 1997; Grigorenko, 2002; Miyake and Friedman, 1998; Ozfidan et al, 2014;

Rathod, 2012; Sawyer and Ranta, 2001; and Skehan, 1991) grouped a number of cognitive, psychological, physical, and sociocultural factors underlying it. Rathod (2012) signalled three sets of factors: the sociolinguistic setting, which refers to the role of L2 in society; the specific social factors, which refer to age, gender, social class, and ethnic identity; and situational factors which refer to the mediums of using L2 in social interaction. Rathod identified a correlation between social stratum and performance in an L2. She found that children from lower socio-economic groups are less successful in L2 learning than children from higher groups. However, she attributed this variation not to the social stratum per se, but to the exposure to quality input which the higher social groups are likely to have (ibid: 8). In another study, Paradis (2011: 228) assessed how certain child-internal and child-external factors predicted English L2 children's vocabulary and verb morphology acquisition. She found that the internal factors of a child including "transfer of morphsyntactic constructions from L1 to L2, language aptitude, and cognitive maturity as represented by chronological age" predicted more variation in acquisition rates than the external factors of a child including "length of exposure to English, and richness of the English environment". She found that maternal education had an influence on children's SLA rates, and children of mothers with post-secondary education had richer stores of vocabulary than children of mothers with secondary education only.

In a further study on siblings, Dale, *et al* (2010) studied the achievement records of 604 English and Welsh twin pairs as juxtaposed with the UK National Curriculum criteria. They found that the heritability factors limit shared environmental influence, and that individual differences among siblings determine the rates of SLA. A possible limitation of this study is that it relied on twins' achievement in classrooms, but it did not explain why these twins had this variation in an L2. Ozfidan, *et al* (2014) examined the sociocultural factors adult English language learners experienced in L2 learning. The interviews focused on peer interaction, feedback, and self-efficacy. They found that peer interaction had a major influence on language learning, and that negative teacher feedback had an undesired effect on the self-efficacy of participants. In a further study, Stevens and Ishizawa (2007) researched the variation of the linguistic levels among siblings and studied the "usage of minority languages among children of foreign-born parents" (ibid: 1009). They attributed the variation among immigrant siblings to their different assimilative trajectories and the familial context that encourage or discourage the use of minority language inside the American community.

1.2. Research Scope and Goals

This research study aimed at investigating the sociolinguistic variation among Arab siblings. It focused on studying the factors leading some brothers or sisters to outperform their siblings. This study was based on a grounded theory research in which informants' contributions constitute the raw materials necessary for defining the variables influencing SLA. It specifically aimed at answering the question: what contributes to the sociolinguistic variation in EFL among Arab siblings?

2. Method

The application of this research relied on a Grounded Theory (GT) paradigm in which the analytic codes and categories were created from the data yielded through the richness of interaction between the researcher and participants (Charmaz, 2006; Crooks, 2001; Dey, 1999; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; and Jones and Alony, 2011). The GT encourages conducting research with minimal pre-existing conceptualizations, predetermined ideas, or theoretical sensitivity influencing it, so that inductive construction of abstract categories can be applied to discover the basic social and common processes in the data. The GT approach has a constructivist nature as well. The researcher's interaction with the

participants allowed for no unidimensional external realities affecting the sequence of discussion (Charmaz, 2006). Driven by this epistemology, the data were collected through case study exploration of pairs and groupings of Arab siblings. The researcher began the semi-structured interviews with a topic guide that was developed or altered based on emerging data from participants (Jones and Alony, 2011). The preciseness of data participants provided on any topic was not the focus per se; the intent was to monitor the level of language used, the techniques applied to correct errors, the skill of semi-formal and slang language use, the use of lexical ties and cohesive devices, and First Language (L1) interference. This lexical and syntactic exploration addressed the linguistic side of the phenomenon. As outlined by Rowley (2002: 18) and Yin (1994), it is only through a case study that the researcher can answer "How" and "Why" something happens and why it happens in this way.

2.1. Sample / Participants

The participating siblings in this study (N=15) were living and enrolled in undergraduate programs in private universities in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The sample was composed of nine female and six male participants making seven groups since the first group had three siblings. The fifteen participants were currently enrolled in different majors of engineering and business management; and they had their elementary education in the UAE schools. Three of them were Jordanian, two were Palestinian, two were Syrian, two were Emirati, two were Egyptian, two were Algerian, and two were Sudanese. Their ages ranged between 19 and 30 with an age average of 23.066. All the participants passed either the IELTS or TOEFL proficiency test. Since the iBT TOEFL test was popular for many students, nine of them passed it with scores that ranged between 75 and 105 out of 120 with a Mean of 91.66. The IELTS scores of the other six participants ranged between 5.0 and 6.5 with a Mean of 5.41. Eight of the fifteen participants completed their elementary and high school education in different private schools (later coded as 2), and the other seven participants attended different public/state schools (later coded as 1). This variable addressed the correlation between the type of schooling and linguistic level of each sibling. The native language of mothers of the participants was Arabic except for the mother of the Algerian pair, who was Canadian; however, the two participants were grown up in the UAE. Mothers of the participants were mostly unemployed (later coded as 2) except for the Jordanian group, whose mother was an English teacher (later coded as 1). Selection of the participants was based on the criteria that they had a sibling attending the same university, and were willing to be interviewed. Each Sibling Group (SG) was coded from one to seven and the siblings in each group were ordered chronologically using the letters A, B, or C. The SG1/A, for instance, referred to the elder Sibling of Group 1; whereas SG7/B referred to the younger sibling of group 7. Table 1 listed all the demographic details of participants.

Table 1. Demographics of Participants

Codes	Gender	Nationality	Major	Age	IELTS TOEFL	School	Father's Job	Mother's	Hobbies
SG1/A	M	Jordanian	Ind. Eng.	23	85	2	Businessman	1	2
SG1/B	F	Jordanian	Arch. Eng.	21	95	2	Businessman	1	2
SG1/C	M	Jordanian	Finance	21	6.5	2	Businessman	1	2
SG2/A	F	Palestinian	Finance	22	5	1	Admin Assistant	2	1 & 2
SG2/B	M	Palestinian	Civil Eng.	21	5	1	Admin Assistant	2	1 & 2
SG3/A	M	Emirati	Int. Bus.	22	75	1	Businessman	2	1 & 2

SG3/B	F	Emirati	Finance	19	90	2	Businessman	2	1 & 2
SG4/A	M	Egyptian	Civil Eng.	22	5.5	1	Teacher	2	1 & 2
SG4/B	M	Egyptian	Ind. Eng.	20	95	1	Teacher	2	2
SG5/A	F	Algerian	Software	27	99	2	Field Engineer	2	2
SG5/B	F	Algerian	MIS	25	105	2	Field Engineer	2	2
SG6/A	F	Sudanese	BBA	24	89	1	Admin Assistant	2	1 & 2
SG6/B	F	Sudanese	Int. Bus.	20	92	2	Admin Assistant	2	1 & 2
SG7/A	F	Syrian	Int. Bus.	30	5.5	1	Admin Assistant	2	1 & 2
SG7/B	F	Syrian	HR	29	5	1	Admin Assistant	2	1 & 2

2.2. Data Setting and Procedures

These data were extracted from a number of semi-structured individual interviews with the nominated participants. It took a month to conduct the interviews and reflect on the data provided by each participant. This provided an opportunity to assess the value of obtained data and the extent to which they contribute to understanding the phenomenon. The semi-structured interviews were guided by prompts to encourage siblings to talk about different topics and allow the researcher to observe different language aspects such as accuracy and fluency, lexical items and cohesive devices, meditating and correcting unintentional errors, academic vocabulary, and L1 interference. These interviews were recorded to allow for review of the material. The participants were encouraged to talk about themselves and their families, travel and hobbies, their majors and academic courses, culture and globalization, and their future plans after graduation. Each meeting lasted between 20 to 30 minutes depending on the richness of ideas an interviewee conveyed. The rationale for conducting these interviews was to collect data through indirect and unintentional observation of each participant's mastery of language skills. The researcher was not giving much load to what participants' input about their families, tourism, and majors, but these topics were created to notice how they used the language and the strategies they applied to correct their errors. In addition, the participants were asked to report on what contributed to improving their levels in English. They reflected on their personal experiences and the factors that influenced their proficiency or deficiency. Informal conversation was tolerated for participants to reflect on their hobbies and the type of songs they listen. They talked about the friends they spend time with – whether Arabs or foreigners. This informal format helped to get in-depth detail on the level of exposure each sibling had to English and the mediums of interaction available for him/her. Consent forms were signed by each participant, and all interviews were recorded and transcribed to facilitate data analysis.

2.3. Data Analysis

Both discourse and thematic analyses were applied in this study. Discourse analysis goes beyond noticing the surface structure of discourse to studying the appropriateness and relevance of discourse to the context and the use of discourse markers, lexical ties, and speech acts (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and (Van Dijk, 2006). This analysis allows the researcher to gauge the rate of accuracy and fluency of siblings, their skills to use different discourse markers and correct errors, and the degree of L1 interference. This microanalysis was consolidated with a further macro thematic analysis to identify the emerging patterns (themes) within data. Applying thematic analysis helped to capture what is important about the data in relation to the research topic and research questions (ibid: 82). The tables below show the discourse analysis of the contribution of each sibling group along with the themes emerging from the data. The analysis also elaborates on the variables each sibling believes has affected his/her proficiency / deficiency in English.

Table 2. Discourse Analysis of SG1

Siblings	Syntactic Structure & Discourse Ties	Overall Fluency & L1 Interference	Factors Underlying Fluency / Deficiency
SG1/A	Notable accuracy and automaticity in using: Preterite, copula sentences, 3rd person present, presentatives, comparative & superlative ads, parallel comparison, used to, gerund, modals, passive voice, conditional clauses, subordinators, adverbial clauses,	Notable fluency and minimal L1 interference	Foreign international school, Foreign friends, *Foreign movies and songs, gaming*
SG1/B	Significant accuracy and automaticity in using: Verb inflection, preterite, copula sentences, 3rd person present, presentatives, comparative & superlative ads, parallel comparison, used to, modals, passive voice, conditional clauses, subordinators, adverbial clauses	Significant mastery of language skills, least minimal L1 interference	Reading and writing stories, foreign international school, hobbies, *not social at the beginning of her life,*
SG1/C	Reasonable accuracy in using: Negation, preterite, copula sentences, 3rd person present, used to, adverbial clauses, future simple	Average fluency with some hesitations, using Arabic words	Foreign international school, foreign mates,

The analysis of the discourse of these three siblings showed notable fluency and mastery of language skills. They had above average knowledge of language forms and know when and how to use each syntactic structure. SG1/B had significant accuracy and automaticity in using authentic expressions like "*I attribute my proficiency to myself*" and "*My Dad will definitely go with what I am already on*". Like SB1/A and SG1/C, she attributed much of her development in English to school education and her interests in reading and composing short stories. However, lack of sociability was a trait that characterized SG1/B from the other two siblings. It is assumed that she had enough time, which she dedicated for reading and writing short stories. Hence, lack of sociability is not a reason per se that positively affected her linguistic level at English. However, through her vigilance and autonomy, she managed to consume the time she had in reinforcing her linguistic wealth. For SG1/A and SG1/C, they had the opportunity to chat and go out with foreign friends which was not a priority for SG1/B. A common feature of the three siblings was their high-level education in international schools. This offered them an opportunity to get abundant exposure to quality and quantity linguistic input and had more avenues for interaction and language use. This merit could hardly be facilitated without the financial support of their father and the awareness of their mother (working as an English teacher) to empower them with necessary language skills. SG1/A and SG1/B had a slightly more advanced linguistic level than SG1/C who did not exert additional effort to improve his English other than the formal instruction materials at school. Conversely, SG1/A and SG1/B used to take more independent ways to improve their English other than what they formally learn at school.

Table 3. Discourse Analysis of SG2

Siblings	Syntactic Structure & Discourse Ties	Fluency & L1 Interference	Factors Underlying Fluency / Deficiency
SG2/A	Poor accuracy in using: Preterite, 3rd person present, gerund, modals, conditional clauses, adverbial clauses,	Low level of accuracy and fluency, providing short answers, many hesitations, major L1 interference, using Arabic words	Poor scholastic education, unmotivated teacher, lack of contact with foreign friends, culture, Arabic movies

SG2/B	Poor accuracy in using: 3rd person present, Preterite, gerund, modals, negation	Low level of accuracy and fluency, using choppy sentences, major L1 interference	Poor scholastic education, unhappiness with English teacher, some foreign friends, Arabic movies

The overall proficiency level of this pair was substandard with poor accuracy and fluent presentation of ideas. This pair received their elementary education in state/public schools in which all subjects were taught in Arabic. Further, English was taught by Arab teachers, whose mother tongue was not English. Demotivated and disinterested teachers seem to have affected their level of English, and the formal instruction materials were reported by them as insufficient. This pair could not have the opportunity to enhance their proficiency in English through joining ESL training centres or utilizing the available online resources independently. For SG2/A, her speech included many inaccuracies like "*teacher will supporting me**" and "*after I get the mark, my mood changing**". Her speech was mostly choppy like "*this weekend I will sit with my sister. I will teach her. She will has a test**". She attributed much of her deficiency in English to poor basic education. However, she considered the local culture as a hindrance, which limits her contact and interaction with foreign friends; unlike her brother who is not restricted by parents on who he chooses to be friends. Nevertheless, the analysis showed multiple inaccuracies in the speech of SG2/B in examples like "*I can understood these song**" and "*my big brother have many American friends**". While inaccurate sentences and inappropriate usage of syntactic structures both characterized this sibling pair, SG2/B presented a greater fluency and his speech had fewer hesitations than his sister. This is because of the opportunities the local culture offers him in relation to contact with foreigners.

Table 4. Discourse Analysis of SG3

Siblings	**Syntactic Structure & Discourse Ties**	**Fluency & L1 Interference**	**Factors Underlying Fluency / Deficiency**
SG3/A	Reasonable accuracy in using: 3rd person present, copula sentences, Preterite, presentatives, used to, gerund, modals, conditional clauses, adverbial clauses,	Fluency is not great, short sentences, many hesitations, using Arabic words	Public schools, non-native teachers of English, *reading is not my hobby*
SG3/B	Significant accuracy and automaticity in using: Preterite, verb inflection, gerund, presentatives, comparative & superlative ads, used to, modals, negation, passive voice, conditional clauses, subordinators, adverbial clauses	Significant mastery of language skills, confidence, flow of speech, low attention to decoding words	Foreign international school, *staying in the UK for a year,* reading stories, mostly Eng. movies

Unlike SG1 and SG2, the variation between the two siblings of SG3 was internal and great. SG3/A joined a public/state school – which is the tradition for many Emirati citizens – and attributed his non-proficient English to the fact that all subjects were taught in Arabic. This sibling did not favour to take independent routes for improving his English relying mostly on formal instruction materials at school. He did not consider reading as a favourite hobby. His speech showed poverty in using academic terms with notable inaccuracies in situations like "*there is many friends I go out with**" and "*she don't encourage us to read stories**". Conversely, SG3/B showed exceptional fluency and accuracy not only in the use of syntactic structures but also in using authentic expressions. Some of her sayings were "*writing a project was a piece of cake for me*", "*I sometimes beat around the bush if I have less to say about a topic*" and "*travelling to the UK helped me to kill two birds with one stone*". Although being highly influential, distinctive education in international schools was not the single variable affecting her

proficiency. Travelling to the UK was a rich context for her to be exposed to unlimited input and use of English in diverse real-life situations. Unlike SG3/A, the personal activities of SG3/B also empowered her with robust knowledge for using appropriate vocabulary and syntactic structures, let alone the discourse ties that maintain the cohesion of speech. The lingua franca in this pair was not identical, and the immersion of each sibling in English-speaking contexts was an additional theme that made such variation.

Table 5. Discourse Analysis of SG4

Siblings	Syntactic Structure & Discourse Ties	Fluency & L1 Interference	Factors Underlying Fluency / Deficiency
SG4/A	Reasonable accuracy in using: Present progressive, 3rd person present, Preterite, used to, gerund, modals, adverbial clauses	L1 interference is notable, less confident in speaking, many hesitations, used few Arabic words	Poor education in public schools, non-native teachers of English, no contact with foreigners
SG4/B	Reasonable accuracy in using: Negation, preterite, gerund, used to, modals, conditional clauses, adverbial clauses	High attention for selecting words and forming sentences, short sentences and hesitations, less confident	Inefficient education in private schools, less motivated teachers, all courses are in Arabic

The discourse analysis of the two male siblings of SG4 showed no significant variation in their linguistic levels. Initially, both of them were educated in Arabic schools where all subjects were taught in Arabic. In addition, both siblings had minimal exposure to quality and quantity input that was limited to formal instruction materials in classrooms taught by non-native teachers of English. Except for SG4/B who enjoys watching foreign movies, both siblings took no action to improve their English either via interaction with native speakers or travelling to English-speaking countries. Expressions such as "*I enjoys shopping, I favours doing exercises, I likes watching foreign movies*" were common in their speech. When it came to automaticity, SG4/A provided expressions like "*Each one have different thinking**" and "*I have friends who talks English**". SG4/B was not that much different from his sibling, as his speech had some inaccurate expressions like "*English was help in my major**" and "*I was jealous from others and I thought to improve my English and I start find vocabulary and I study structures**". Apart from the grammar mistakes, this discourse seems poor for students who have spent twelve years of academic study at public/state schools. These variables embodied the variation between this pair and the SG3 and SG1 as well.

Table 6. Discourse Analysis of SG5

Siblings	Syntactic Structure & Discourse Ties	Fluency & L1 Interference	Factors Underlying Fluency / Deficiency
SG5/A	Significant accuracy and automaticity in using: Copula sentences, 3rd person present, preterite, presentatives, used to, gerund, modals, passive voice, conditional clauses, adverbial clauses,	Native-like fluency with minimal L1 interference	Living in Canada, foreign international school, foreign friends & movies
SG5/B	Significant accuracy and automaticity in using: Verb inflection, preterite, copula sentences, 3rd person present, presentatives, gerund, modals, passive voice, conditional clauses, negation	Native-like fluency with minimal L1 interference	Living in Canada, foreign international school, foreign friends, reading novels

In comparison with the other groups, these two female siblings had native-like fluency with minimal L1 interference. Their speech included multiple academic vocabulary such as "*unrealistic, diverse, mature, absolutely, civilization, simplicity, extravagance, investment, etc*." They also used authentic expressions like "*grabbing books, difficult to fit, the course is more tiring but not difficult, born with a sliver spoon, etc*." The variation between siblings of this pair was not noticeable. However, on juxtaposing the variables that affected their fluency with the variables relevant to the other groups, it becomes clearer how the development of English as a lingua franca depends largely on abundant exposure to quality input.

Table 7. Discourse Analysis of SG6

Siblings	Syntactic Structure & Discourse Ties	Fluency & L1 Interference	Factors Underlying Fluency / Deficiency
SG6/A	Reasonable accuracy in using: Gerund, modals, 3rd person present, copula sentences, Preterite, used to	Ability to express herself, less confident	Public schools, non-native teachers of English, few friends
SG6/B	Significant accuracy and automaticity in using: Comparative & superlative ads, used to, modals, Preterite, verb inflection, gerund, presentatives, passive voice, conditional clauses, subordinators, clauses	Excellent fluency, flow of speech, confident, low attention to decoding words	Foreign international school, living in an English-speaking community, reading books and writing poetry

The siblings of this pair showed obvious variation in their English. The elder sibling (SG6/A) attended a state/public school; whereas the SG6/B was in an international school where English is the medium of instruction in all courses. SG6/A favours both Arabic and foreign movies; whereas SG6/B is inclined to watch only foreign movies. It was significant from the analysis that the linguistic level of SG6/B surpassed that of SG6/A in many aspects. SG6/B expressed her ideas in a more fluent manner than SG6/A. The discourse analysis of SG6/A showed many syntactic inaccuracies when she spoke about her sister (SG6/B) in examples like "*She know many words*. She study in a good school*. She get high scores in IELTS** (for reference to past actions). *She has a lot of friend in American nationality*. She is chatting in English** (for reference to habitual past). On the contrary, SG6/B showed spontaneity and automaticity in producing utterances with accurate intonation in communication like "*I read up to 3 books weekly. I have a blog and write daily. I spend most of my day talking in English. I think in English and even talk to myself in English. I watch English movies and serials. I live in English, so everything I do is in English*." For SG6/B, her personal interests, agency, independence, and autonomy are seen as critical variables leading to this variation between her and SG6/A. She attributed her native-like fluency and use of slang expressions to movies; whereas accuracy and the huge wealth of vocabulary were ascribed to formal instruction at school.

**Table 8**. Discourse Analysis of SG7

Siblings	Syntactic Structure & Discourse Ties	Overall Fluency & L1 Interference	Factors Underlying Fluency / Deficiency
SG7/A	Poor accuracy in using: Almost all grammar forms	Inaccurate structures, short abridged answers, many hesitations, major use of Arabic	Poor scholastic education, marriage & family issues

SG7/B	Poor accuracy in using:	Inaccurate structures, short abridged	Poor scholastic education,
	Almost all grammar forms	answers, many hesitations, use of	poor practice of English
		Arabic	

The two female siblings of this pair are the eldest participants, 30 and 29 respectively. They were born in the Emirates, yet the poor resources prevented them from joining regular public schools. Instead, they joined evening centres initiated by the government for assisting elderly people to complete their education and get high school degrees. SG7/A could barely use present and past simple tenses without errors, and her discourse resembled transliterations from Arabic in examples like "*I think business is me*. This company continue for years** (for reference to past incidents). *The risk is high, the profit is more higher*. Why don't they making classes in the morning*? They was fishing*. Drama make me crying*. I should be confidence*.*" The situation at home and for schooling for SG7/B was the same as her sibling, and she also had many inaccuracies in her speech, and many of her expressions were flavoured with Arabic accent. Examples include "*She just laugh and smiling*. The first time I saw this places*. It is depend on my experience*. I help others to can understand me*. I have little vocabulary. I born her*. Me I am suffer*.*" She attributed this deficiency in English to poor formal instruction and the negative attitude she had against her teacher. For SG7/B, the affective domain was effectual; as her apprehension to make mistakes and her effort to avoid the blame of her teacher raised her affective filter up. The deficiency of SG7/B in English goes beyond availability of resources or poor family support to psychological factors.

3. Discussion and Implications

The findings of this research study are not conflicting with previous studies and literature related to language acquisition in different contexts. The three themes identified in this study are exposure to quality input and interaction opportunities, provision of quality education, and autonomy and independent activities. Some of these factors are identified by Rathod (2012) who considers the mediums of using a foreign language and the social stratum as influential factors that affect the sociolinguistic level of individuals. The findings of this research are also in agreement with the outcomes of the study conducted by Paradis (2011) who argues that there are internal and external factors that influence the development in language acquisition. Paradis considered length of exposure to English and richness of the English environment as both influential external factors that impact language acquisition. This study consequently revives the debate around whether language acquisition is created, developed, promoted, or inherited. This development nevertheless takes on different forms and levels based on the context in which language is learnt, practised, and evaluated. It is a complex process with correlation between many interrelated variables as shown in figure (1) below.
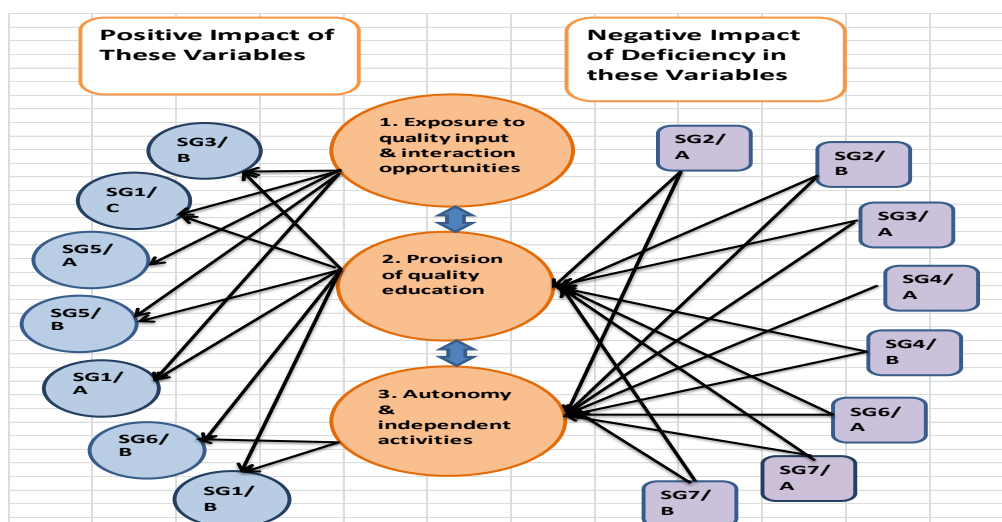
Figure 1. Variables Affecting the Lingua Franca among Arab Siblings

To date, very few studies explain the sociolinguistic variables that make the variation in EFL among Arab siblings. The thematic analysis of individual interviews raised three variables namely: exposure to quality input and interaction opportunities, provision of quality education, and autonomy and independent activities. The circles in Figure (1) refer to the positive impact of these variables and the contributions they have to the development of English of seven participants. However, the squares represent the deficiency in these variables as influencing the linguistic levels of the other eight participants negatively. For the first variable, SG1/A, SG1/C, SG3/B, SG5/A, and SG5/B found that their exposure to unlimited linguistic input and richness of interaction opportunities contributed to subconscious and spontaneous development of their English. Out of the fifteen participants, eight of them found they did not have enough exposure to English and adequate opportunities for using it outside classroom borders. However, this variable is not referred to directly by the eight participants since they attributed their lack of exposure and interaction to the poor education they received in public/state schools in which most of the instructors were not native speakers of English.

For the second variable (provision of quality education), the fifteen participants believed that formal scholastic education influenced their lingua franca either positively or negatively. Seven participants attributed the variation in their linguistic levels to the quality education they had and the authentic English community in which they lived. The other eight siblings considered inappropriate and inadequate education in public schools as the key element of their deficiency in English. In response to the historically substandard performance of public schools in Abu Dhabi, the Abu Dhabi Department of Education & Knowledge (ADEK) has set up a substitution strategy where many Western teachers of English, Science, and Mathematics have been recruited in public schools instead of native Arabic teachers.

The third variable (autonomy and independent activities) has been considered by ten participants as highly effectual. They believed that their autonomy and the independent activities they intrinsically initiated contributed significantly to the improvement of their English. In the process, their personal interests, autonomous, and independent activities were prominent for two most distinguished siblings: SG1/B and SG6/B. For the first one, she attributed her distinction in English to autonomy and intrinsic motivation to reading and writing short stories. For her, these activities improved her accuracy and enhanced her store of vocabulary. The case of SG6/B is similar to SG1/B, as she also read stories and wrote poetry. Formal authorities accordingly should provide the facilities and resources that encourage independent learning and promote learners' autonomy. Language education at schools should improve learners' understanding that EFL can hardly be enhanced through classroom input only; other unlimited resources are available and should be approached independently by them. EFL learners should also

perceive that the classroom input is limited and tailored to achieve certain educational goals (Al Ghazali, 2013).

6. Conclusion

On juxtaposing the linguistic level of siblings within the same group and between it and other groups, there exits much variation in their English as a lingua franca. This variation goes beyond the existence of the LAD to more sociolinguistic, physical, and affective variables (Halliday, 1986). The participants' exposure to quality and quantity input had its positive impact on the enhancement of the linguistic level of many of them. This was facilitated either through immersion in English-speaking communities or via formal scholastic education of which many participants considered as highly effectual in defining their linguistic level (Lemetyinen, 2012). Financial affordability proved to be an additional factor influencing the level of immersion in an authentic English-speaking community and hence contributing to the variation among ESL learners. The siblings who had the opportunity to stay in an English-speaking community not only got exposed to quality input but also were able to acquire the local dialect, informal language, and daily culture. Further research needs to be conducted in this area to identify how to create authentic-like EFL learning contexts. Besides the above factors, learners' autonomy and independence proved to have equal significance to the first two variables. It could be necessary therefore to conduct extensive research to foster learners' autonomy and encourage independent learning procedures (Al Ghazali, 2006) and Skehan (1991). This includes not only improving the physical and fiscal resources but also refining the beliefs of ESL learners. They need to realize that proficiency in English can hardly be attained through one limited source or adapted materials; different avenues should be approached independently like extensive readings, integration in English-speaking communities, and interaction with native speakers of English and listen to their usage of English in natural authentic contexts as much as possible. Moreover, EFL learners should acquire the fixed expressions, idioms, and shortcuts used by native speakers to avoid using formal, repetitive language. Furthermore, it is necessary for them to study the basic rules of English grammar at least to improve the accuracy of produced language. Last but not least, they should write something in English every day to improve their language rhetoric, coherence, and cohesion. This study has some limitations represented in either the unwillingness of siblings to participate in interviews or their worry to have their English be directly assessed by an external evaluator.

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Arap kardeşler arasında EFL'deki sosyo-dilbilimsel değişimi anlamak

Öz

Bu çalışma, İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak (EFL) öğrenen Arap kardeşleri arasında, bu dilin sosyo-dilbilimsel varyasyonu açıklayan çeşitli dilbilimsel, psikolojik ve sosyokültürel değişkenleri incelemiştir. Değişkenler önceden belirlenmemiş, ancak katılımcıların katkısı olan bir teori araştırmasında katılımcıların katkılarından ve verilerinden çıkarılmıştır. Bu çalışmaya katılan kardeşler (N = 15) BAE okullarında eğitim gören üniversite öğrencileridir. Tüm insanlar, Chomsky tarafından önerilen Dil Toplama Cihazı (LAD) ile güçlendirilmiş olsa da,

bu, özellikle dili kullanan kişiler ve kardeşler arasındaki sosyo-dilbilimsel değişimi açıklamamaktadır. Doğuştan gelen yetenek aynı zamanda kardeşlerin benzer yeterlilik seviyelerine sahip olacağının bir kanıtı değildir. Söylem analizi, kardeşler arasında dil doğruluğu ve akıcılık, L1 girişimi, kendiliğindenlik ve konuşmanın otomatikliği açısından fark edilir bir sosyo-dilbilimsel varyasyon göstermiştir. Bu kardeşlerin bazıları İngilizce'yi geliştirmek için eşit fırsatlara sahiptir; Ancak, analiz bazı duygusal değişkenlerin yeterlik düzeylerinin gelişimini etkilediğini göstermiştir. Tematik analiz, kalite girdisi ve etkileşim fırsatlarına maruz kalma, kaliteli eğitimin sağlanması, özerklik ve bağımsız faaliyetler olmak üzere üç değişkeni işaret etmiştir. On beş katılımcıdan sekizi, İngilizce'deki eksikliklerini, dilbilimsel girdiye yeterli düzeyde maruz kalmayı kolaylaştırmayan eğitim sisteminin verimsizliğine bağlamışlardır. Özerklik ve bağımsızlık, kardeşler arasındaki değişimi de yaratmada etkili oldu. Bu çalışma BAE'deki EFL öğrencileri arasında yeterlilik seviyelerini etkilemede bağlamsal faktörlerin önemine ışık tutmaktadır. Araştırma bulgularının sonuçları ve önerileri tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar sözcükler: dil değişimi; dil edinme cihazı; ortak dil; maruziyet ve dil kullanımı; anlaşılır girdi

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