

Causative-inchoative Alternation in the Language of Jordanian EFL Learners

Abstract:

Causative-inchoative construction is a pair of verbs discussing the same notion, which is a state of change with a different form for each verb. It has been noted that causative-inchoative alternation constitutes a learnability problem for Arab EFL learners and very few studies addressed this language form among Arab learners and more specifically Jordanian learners of English. The present study is an attempt to measure the perception and production of English causative-inchoative alternations by learners whose native language is Arabic. In collecting the required data for the study, grammaticality judgement and correction task was used. A total of 24 Jordanian English majors partook in the study. Having analyzed the data statistically, the study results depicted that comprehending and producing causative and inchoative constructions by Jordanian English majors is not an easy task. It was also found that causative structures are more readily to acquire than their inchoative counterparts. More precisely, it could be argued that Jordanian learners of English acquire the causative form earlier than the inchoative form. Finally, the results revealed that language transfer is the driving force of acquiring causative-inchoative structures, where a great deal of errors can be traced back to Arabic. The study arrived at the conclusion that the participants have a weak competence of causative-inchoative forms which is best exhibited in their responses to the items of grammaticality judgement task. This conclusion could be attributed to the fact that Arabic and English vary greatly with respect to encoding causative-inchoative forms.

Key words: Causative-inchoative Constructions, English Majors, Language Transfer; Grammaticality Judgement Task

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