

Multilingual Learners' Strategies for Vocabulary Acquisition: Insights from Language Mixing and Borrowing

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine the nuanced processes through which multilingual students in Saudi Arabia learn new words. In particular, it seeks to illuminate the significant role that linguistic admixture, linguistic borrowing, and linguistic competence play in this development. This study aims to add to the current literature on vocabulary learning in a bilingual or multilingual setting by investigating these factors. Fascinating insights on how these factors affect vocabulary development in a linguistically diverse setting are uncovered by the study. Three hundred people took part in in-depth tests of their ability to use Arabic and English words in context. At the same time, they were tested for their inclination toward combining and borrowing languages using carefully constructed questionnaires. Results highlight the transforming effect of lexical enrichment through linguistic borrowing and its positive correlation with vocabulary test scores. Vocabulary acquisition, especially in the target language's specific context, is also shown to be greatly aided by a high level of linguistic competence, as is made clear by the study's findings. However, a more detailed analysis is needed due to the complexity of the impact of lexical mixing. This suggests that, when used thoughtfully, blending languages may not hinder the development of one's vocabulary. The results presented here highlight the need for language education programs that are tailored to the unique linguistic needs of students and encourage the use of effective strategies for expanding students' vocabularies.

Keywords: *vocabulary acquisition, multilingual learners, language mixing, language borrowing, language proficiency.*

Introduction

The phenomenon of multilingualism is a vibrant and all-encompassing force that exerts a profound impact on the realms of communication, education, and social interactions within societies across the globe. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, renowned for its abundant linguistic variety, presents an enthralling subject of analysis within this particular framework. Arabic, being the designated official language and enjoying widespread usage among the populace, stands as a prominent linguistic force in the country. However, the intricate tapestry of cultural diversity within the nation's borders introduces a plethora of immigrant communities and expatriate labourers who contribute their respective mother tongues, including but not limited to English, Urdu, Tagalog, and various others, thereby enriching the linguistic landscape (Al-Khresheh, 2016; Al-Seghayer, 2015). The intricate and diverse linguistic fabric at hand poses captivating obstacles and prospects for the acquisition of vocabulary among learners in Saudi Arabia.

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The acquisition of vocabulary is a fundamental aspect of developing language proficiency, exerting a significant impact on an individual's capacity to comprehend, express, and engage proficiently within diverse linguistic environments (Voltmer et al., 2021). Within the borders of Saudi Arabia, a nation renowned for its multicultural ambience and distinguished by a rich tapestry of languages, it becomes imperative to delve into the intricate realm of vocabulary acquisition. The importance of figuring out how students navigate this complicated procedure cannot be overstated. The primary objective of this study is to examine how polyglots acquire their linguistic skills, with a focus on the role that linguistic fusion and borrowing play in their development.

Saudi Arabia's linguistic makeup is fascinating because of the dynamic interaction of so many different languages, which has resulted in a tangled web of language borrowing and development. These events significantly affect how people use language and how they learn new words. In multilingual contexts, language mixing is common and significant since it involves the use of more than one language in a single discourse. As defined by Poplack and Walker, (2003), borrowing is "the process by which lexical items or linguistic aspects from one language are incorporated into another," with or without subsequent modification to fit the phonological and morphological norms of the target language. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's linguistic diversity—which includes both Arabic and non-Arabic languages—is well-known. Al-Mansoori (2017) argues that a multilingual society fosters dynamic and ever-evolving interaction. The fundamental goal of this research is to examine how native speakers of many languages interact with one another to develop techniques for vocabulary expansion.

Researchers exploring vocabulary acquisition techniques within the setting of multilingualism in Saudi Arabia have a significant barrier due to the complex nature of this phenomenon. Unfortunately, the current corpus of scholarly literature about this subject matter remains somewhat constrained, as underscored by the findings of Al-Tamimi (2020). The existing corpus of academic literature in the field of second language acquisition has predominantly focused on situations involving either one language or two languages, thereby overlooking the intricate complexities that emerge when multiple languages coexist and interact within a single linguistic ecosystem (Wei, 2011). The observation of a research vacuum in the context of Saudi Arabia is of special significance due to the prevalence of multilingualism in this environment, rather than being an uncommon phenomenon.

Objective of the Study

This research aims to close that knowledge gap by examining the intricate methods by which monolingual and multilingual Saudis acquire new vocabulary and grammar in the country's linguistically diverse environment. The two main foci of our study are: Given the high rate of bilingualism in Saudi Arabia, it is fascinating to see how multilingual pupils acquire such a large vocabulary. Due to the diversity of the world's languages, innovative approaches are needed for effective cross-cultural dialogue. Taking a look at how these pupils are learning new words in many languages might shed light on the complexities of language acquisition overall. How does their utilization of a lexical pool from other languages enrich their vocabulary?

Literature Review and Previous Studies

Extensive study has been conducted within the domain of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) about the process by which individuals acquire new vocabulary. Numerous tactics employed by language learners in acquiring new vocabulary have been identified by researchers. The basic types of learning into four distinct categories: explicit learning, accidental learning, semi-explicit learning, and incidental learning. Explicit learning

refers to the deliberate and conscious use of strategies aimed at enhancing one's vocabulary, such as the systematic memorization and analysis of word lists. Incidental learning refers to the acquisition of language by exposure to relevant contextual conditions, such as reading or listening, without a deliberate intention to learn. There exists a degree of convergence between inadvertent learning and deliberate learning, and it is plausible to employ both approaches in tandem.

Research has shown that a large vocabulary is an indicator of high language competence. Laufer and Nation found a substantial correlation between vocabulary size and reading comprehension in their 1999 study. This highlights the critical role that expanding one's vocabulary plays in enhancing one's linguistic competence. This emphasizes the significance of knowing how students learning several languages in Saudi Arabia acquire and improve their vocabularies.

Vocabulary acquisition becomes more difficult when a person has a large number of languages in their linguistic repertoire. Learners of a language in a multilingual environment are likely to adopt a variety of strategies for acquiring vocabulary from different linguistic traditions (Kecskes & Papp, 2000). In Saudi Arabia, where Arabic is the official language but many other languages are spoken as well, it is crucial to understand how multilingual students approach the task of vocabulary acquisition.

Language mixing, or the use of many languages within a single conversation or discourse, is a common occurrence in multilingual settings (Wei, 2011). Previous study has established the phenomena of multilingual persons using their full range of languages during conversation (Grosjean, 1982). Since code-switching between Arabic and other languages is commonplace in Saudi Arabia (Al-Tamimi, 2020), the aforementioned problem is particularly pertinent in this country's environment. Research done so far on language mixing suggests it might have both positive and negative effects on vocabulary acquisition. Mixing languages has the potential advantage of exposing speakers to a larger variety of words from other languages. Language learners from diverse cultures may cause interference and misunderstanding by combining words with comparable meanings from different languages (Bullock & Toribio, 2009). So, it's important to look into how language contact influences vocabulary development techniques in Saudi Arabia.

Borrowing words and expressions from one language and using them in another is a sign of multilingualism (Thomason, 2006). Arabic (Al-Mansoori et al., 2017) and non-Arabic (Al-Mansoori, 2017) terms and phrases are used interchangeably in daily conversation in Saudi Arabia. There are far-reaching implications for language instruction as a result of the aforementioned occurrence. According to Poplack and Walker (2003), students of a foreign language must modify their use of foreign words to conform to the phonological and morphological standards of the target language. Learning how multilingual pupils in Saudi Arabia acquire new vocabulary requires an appreciation for the role that language borrowing plays in this process.

There is a wealth of research on vocabulary acquisition and language learning in general, but very little has been done to examine how people in Saudi Arabia's distinctive multilingual context acquire new words. The complexities that arise in multilingual settings have often been overlooked in previous research, which has mostly concentrated on monolingual or bilingual environments (Wei, 2011). However, a thorough investigation of the particular strategies used by language learners is sometimes lacking in the available studies on multilingual settings (Kecskes & Papp, 2000).

Sociolinguistic aspects of language contact and borrowing have been the major focus of research in Saudi Arabia. Al-Tamimi (2020) and Al-Mansoori (2017) are two examples of studies that look at linguistic perspectives and code-switching habits. While the studies cited above contribute to our understanding of language usage, they stop short of a thorough examination of how linguistic diversity influences word learning. Given the

widespread practice of extensive language mixing and borrowing in the linguistic environment of multilingual learners in Saudi Arabia, it is crucial to do research that fills this hole and gives insights into the process of lexicon acquisition and expansion.

Methods

Focusing on the phenomena of language mixing and borrowing, this study used a quantitative approach to investigate how multilingual learners in Saudi Arabia go about expanding their vocabularies. The use of the past tense is a useful literary device for elaborating on completed research projects. Three hundred people were included in the study because they were actively involved in learning different languages in the Saudi Arabian cultural environment. To ensure that a wide range of people from different linguistic origins and with variable degrees of ability in Arabic and other languages were included in the study, the participants were selected using a stratified random sample procedure.

Individuals were given tests measuring their vocabulary knowledge and acquisition in both Arabic and English as part of a complete evaluation of their linguistic competence. The evaluations are based on widely used standardized exams in the field of second language acquisition study. The researchers gave the participants a well-crafted questionnaire to learn more about their native languages, language usage, and the methods they use to expand their vocabularies. This questionnaire was built after careful consideration of the relevant literature, guaranteeing that it adheres to well-established theoretical frameworks. The questionnaire's reliability and validity were also established through extensive piloting to further strengthen its use as a research tool.

The quantitative data was analyzed using state-of-the-art statistical programs. Using basic descriptive statistics like mean scores and standard deviations, the researchers analyzed the participants' vocabulary test performance in depth. These statistical methods were used to quickly present an overall picture of how the participants fared. In the current study, Pearson correlation coefficients were used to look into the complex relationships between vocabulary test results, linguistic blending, and linguistic borrowing. The major goal of this research was to identify significant associations between the variables under investigation. To investigate the potential predictive value of language mixing and borrowing frequency in connection to vocabulary test results, the current study employed multiple regression analysis as a methodology. This study additionally accounted for confounding variables including linguistic competence and self-reported vocabulary acquisition practices to remove any possible impact.

Results

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Arabic Vocabulary Test Scores:

Statistic	Arabic Vocabulary Test Scores
Mean	68.45
Standard Dev.	9.23
Minimum	52
Maximum	85

The empirical findings reveal that the Arabic vocabulary test yielded a mean score of 68.45. This statistical measure serves as a representative indicator, suggesting that, on average, the participants achieved this level of performance. There appears to be a great deal of variation in the scores; the calculated standard deviation of 9.23 spans a wide range, from a low of 52 to a high of 85. There is a clear resemblance between the

recorded score distribution and the Gaussian distribution, indicating a tendency toward normality. High degrees of clustering around the mean value are displayed by the vast majority of individuals.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for English Vocabulary Test Scores:

Statistic	English Vocabulary Test Scores
Mean	75.12
Standard Dev.	7.56
Minimum	60
Maximum	92

The average score on an examination of English vocabulary was 75.12, with the mean serving as the statistical measure of central tendency. This numerical representation signifies the average performance level attained by the test takers in this linguistic domain. The calculated standard deviation of 7.56 indicates a relatively lower level of variability in the scores, in comparison to the Arabic test. The scores exhibited a range spanning from a minimum value of 60 to a maximum value of 92. Once more, the observed pattern of scores exhibits a semblance of normality.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis for Arabic Vocabulary Test Scores:

	Arabic Vocabulary Score	Language Mixing Frequency	Language Borrowing Frequency
Pearson Correlation	1.000	-0.265*	0.421**
Language Mixing Frequency	-0.265*	1.000	0.187
Language Borrowing Frequency	0.421**	0.187	1.000

The findings of this study reveal a noteworthy and statistically significant inverse relationship ($r = -0.265$, $p < 0.05$) between the scores obtained in Arabic vocabulary assessments and the frequency of language mixing. This observation implies that individuals who engage in a higher frequency of language mixing tend to exhibit lower scores on Arabic vocabulary tests. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the correlation between these variables exhibits a degree of fragility. The results of the study reveal a noteworthy and robust positive correlation ($r = 0.421$, $p < 0.01$) between the scores obtained in the Arabic vocabulary test and the frequency of language borrowing. This observation suggests a positive correlation between the frequency of language borrowing among participants and their performance on Arabic vocabulary tests. The observed correlation exhibits a commendable degree of strength.

Table 4. Correlation Analysis for English Vocabulary Test Scores:

	English Vocabulary Score	Language Mixing Frequency	Language Borrowing Frequency
Pearson Correlation	1.000	-0.189	0.389*
Language Mixing Frequency	-0.189	1.000	-0.025
Language Borrowing Frequency	0.389*	-0.025	1.000

A noteworthy finding emerges from the data, indicating a statistically significant inverse relationship ($r = -0.189$, $p < 0.05$) between individuals' performance on English

vocabulary tests and their frequency of engaging in language mixing. This observation posits that as individuals partake in a heightened frequency of language blending, their performance on English vocabulary assessments tends to exhibit a downward trend. Nonetheless, akin to the evaluation of Arabic lexicon proficiency, the association between the variables in question exhibits a relatively feeble strength. The findings of this study reveal a noteworthy and substantiated positive correlation ($r = 0.389$, $p < 0.05$) between the scores obtained on English vocabulary tests and the frequency of language borrowing. This finding suggests a positive correlation between the frequency of language borrowing among participants and their performance on English vocabulary tests, indicating that increased engagement in borrowing activities is associated with higher test scores. The observed correlation exhibits a commendable degree of strength.

Table 5. Multiple Regression Analysis for Arabic Vocabulary Test Scores:

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t-Statistic	p-Value
(Intercept)	68.92	2.37	29.03	< 0.001
Language Mixing Frequency	-1.57	0.82	-1.91	0.059
Language Borrowing Frequency	3.28*	1.12	2.93	0.004
Arabic Proficiency Score	0.42	0.14	2.98	0.003

Previous research on the impacts of Arabic competence, language mixing, and language borrowing are all taken into account in this multiple regression analysis of the factors influencing Arabic vocabulary test scores. The intercept (also known as the constant term) is calculated to be 68.92 in this case. If the frequencies of using other languages in addition to Arabic and borrowing words from other languages are both zero, then this is the predicted outcome for the Arabic vocabulary test score. Regression analysis indicates that the coefficient for the frequency of language mixing should be -1.57. However, at the conventional p-value ($p = 0.059$), this coefficient is not even close to being statistically significant. Taking into account the other variables at play, this result implies that the frequency with which two languages are mixed is not significantly correlated with performance on tests of Arabic vocabulary.

The positive coefficient of 3.28 ($p = 0.004$) indicates that the occurrence of language borrowing is statistically significant. After accounting for factors like Arabic proficiency and the likelihood of language mixing, this finding suggests that an increase of one unit in the frequency of language borrowing may be ascribed to a notable gain of 3.28 points in Arabic vocabulary test scores. Our research showed that there is a positive and significant relationship of 0.42 ($p = 0.003$) between Arabic proficiency scores and other variables. This provides strong evidence that the ability to speak Arabic correlates positively with the variable of interest. This finding suggests that even after accounting for the learner's propensity to mix and borrow languages, even a little improvement in Arabic competence (one point) leads to a substantial increase (0.42 points) in performance on an Arabic vocabulary exam.

Discussion

Impact of Language Mixing and Borrowing on Vocabulary Acquisition:

One of the most important things we found was a correlation between how often someone borrows a language and how well they do on tests of Arabic vocabulary. With Arabic as the target language, the aforementioned connection emphasizes the positive effects of using loanwords and phrases from other languages.

That's in line with the idea that borrowing words might improve one's language (Poplack & Walker, 20003). People can successfully assimilate fresh terminology into their

linguistic repertoire when they learn phrases from multiple languages and adapt them to their preferred language. One way to think about this is similar to how new words are added to a language when lexical resources from other languages are adopted. Language borrowing is an excellent method for expanding one's vocabulary, especially in multilingual contexts where people may draw from a wider pool of words.

Particularly salient is the role that language borrowing has in expanding one's vocabulary in a region like Saudi Arabia, where people who speak many languages frequently use phrases from those other languages in their everyday interactions. This research lends credence to the idea that educators and language officials in Saudi Arabia should recognize and even embrace language borrowing as a viable and efficient approach for enhancing vocabulary. There is potential for a more individualized curriculum that takes into account students' multilingual backgrounds if this knowledge is included in language education programs.

Our research did not find statistically significant evidence of an impact of language mixing frequency on Arabic vocabulary test results, in contrast to the positive relationship between the frequency with which one borrows from other languages and one's performance on vocabulary tests. The findings of this study provide a new perspective on the complex and varied features of language mixing in the context of word acquisition.

In multilingual settings like Saudi Arabia, language mixing, in which speakers employ many languages in the course of a single conversation, is common. While concerns about interference and code-switching may prompt some to consider it as a barrier to language proficiency (Bullock & Toribio, 2009), our findings suggest that its impact on vocabulary acquisition is more nuanced than previously thought.

Since there was no statistically significant link between language mixing and test scores, it seems that using another language in a natural and appropriate environment may not hinder vocabulary growth. Students might have access to a wealth of linguistic materials, increasing their opportunities to learn new words. Established concepts of linguistic purity are challenged by the wide variety of viewpoints on language interaction. It's been argued that those who want to learn a lot of different tongues might use language mixing to their advantage.

Language hybridity can have both positive and negative effects, and both should be taken into account. The precise ramifications depend on several factors, including the specific language(s) used, the specific social and linguistic environment, and the specific individual(s) involved. To better understand the nuances of language mixing in the context of vocabulary acquisition and to identify the most beneficial situations in which it may function as an effective approach, more research is needed.

Role of Proficiency in Vocabulary Acquisition

Further, we found that scores on an Arabic vocabulary test correlate positively with levels of Arabic proficiency. The aforementioned link emphasizes the critical role that language competence plays in the vocabulary-building process. Some have theorized that the vast and intricate Arabic lexicon is best mastered by native speakers, who have a leg up on non-natives.

This result is consistent with the widely accepted idea that fluency in a language is essential to the development of linguistic competence (Laufer & Nation, 1999). The capacity to understand and communicate successfully in a second language depends in large part on the learner's vocabulary. It is easier to learn new words and phrases and use them correctly when one has a firm grasp of the grammatical, syntactic, and semantic aspects of a language.

Acquiring a solid command of Arabic has significant ramifications for the development of vocabulary abilities in the context of Saudi Arabia, where Arabic is the designated

official language and acts as the main medium of communication. This declaration stresses the need to invest in language education programs that aim to improve students' linguistic competence. The ability to communicate effectively in a variety of linguistic contexts is greatly enhanced by a firm foundation in Arabic, which assists in the acquisition of vocabulary and also strengthens general language abilities.

The phenomenon of multilingualism brings a new dimension to the connection between language proficiency and the method of expanding one's vocabulary. Multiple languages, including English, Urdu, Tagalog, and others, are spoken in Saudi Arabia due to the large number of immigrant communities, foreign workers, and native speakers who all contribute to the country's unique linguistic environment (Al-Khresheh, 2016). Having the capacity to communicate with others in several languages is increasingly valuable in a world where cultural diversity is increasing.

Our research shows that knowing how to communicate effectively in each language one uses is crucial for multilingual people. Knowledge of Arabic is essential for learning Arabic words. The need to learn new words in English is heightened in Saudi Arabia because of the country's heavy reliance on the language.

Research Limitations and Future Directions

Understanding and appreciating the limitations of this particular study effort is crucial. This research relied on data collected from a subset of Saudi Arabian students who are learning more than one language. It's worth noting that the sample size may not have been large enough to accurately reflect the community, hence the results of this study may not generalize to other multilingual settings. There was also a risk of response bias because the study relied on participants' reports of how often they used a mash-up of languages. Future research in this area may benefit from including a more varied and larger pool of participants. To do this, classes would need to welcome students from a wide range of ages and linguistic backgrounds. Studies that follow participants over time may shed light on how people acquire and use new words over time. Interviews and in-class observations are two examples of qualitative research methodologies with the potential to further our understanding of the tactics students employ and the environmental factors that shape their decision-making.

Conclusion

The first point mentioned is that people who speak more than one language in Saudi Arabia often resort to language borrowing as a means of expanding their vocabularies. The positive correlation between language borrowing and test scores demonstrates the value of using vocabulary and idioms from a variety of languages. This finding has significant implications for language teachers and policymakers since it highlights the need to accept and perhaps even encourage borrowing as a genuine and effective way to increase one's vocabulary.

Furthermore, our findings highlight the central importance of language competency in the vocabulary acquisition process. Mastery of the target language (Arabic or others) lays the groundwork for a rich vocabulary. This underscores the need for measures to improve students' language skills that are both systematic and comprehensive. It's an admission that learning to communicate and increase one's vocabulary in all of a person's languages is essential.

Our research also sheds insight into the complex features of lexical assimilation, which are at the heart of the process of language mixing. Complex and context-dependent though it may be, the impact of lexical borrowing and sharing in multilingual settings is still well-documented. Our research shows that combining languages can have positive

effects on vocabulary growth when used sparingly and in a supportive setting. This platform also has the potential to expose students to a wide range of language resources, which might expand their lexical competence. However, further research is needed to fully understand the nuances of the contexts in which language mixing might be useful.

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