

**ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH MORPHOSYNTACTIC FEATURES OF PAST
AND NON-PAST TENSE AND AGREEMENT BY ADULT L1 ARABIC
SPEAKERS**

By

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**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, University Putra Malaysia, in
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ويسئلونك عن الروح قل الروح من أمر ربي وما أوتيتم من العلم إلا قليلا...

Dan mereka bertanya kepadamu tentang roh. Katakan: “Roh itu dari perkara urusan tuhanku dan kamu tidak diberikan ilmu pengetahuan melainkan sedikit sahaja”
(Al-Israa-85)

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents who taught me to love learning, who taught me that the earth's heart is greater than its map and more clear than its mirror, and for that I am deeply grateful!

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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This study investigates the acquisition of the English morphosyntactic features of past and non-past tense and agreement by adult L1 Arabic speakers within the Minimalist Program framework. In particular, the focus is on the acquisition of the verbal functional categories of T and Agr, the formal features of $[\pm\text{finite}, \pm\text{past}, \pm\text{Agr}]$, the feature strength of T $[\pm\text{strong}]$ as well as verb movement that accounts for the placement of the verb with respect to negation, adverbs and subject floating quantifiers (FQs) in finite and non-finite contexts with thematic, *be* auxiliary and copula *be* verb forms. The morphemes being examined are the third person singular agreement morpheme *-s*, the past tense agreement morpheme *-ed*, the irregular past tense and the *be* auxiliary and copula *be* verb forms of *is*, *am*, *are*, *was* and *were*. The study tests three competing proposals about the representation of functional categories and features in L2

acquisition: the Failed Functional Features Hypothesis (FFFH) (Hawkins and Chan, 1997), the Full Transfer Full Access (FTFA) hypothesis (Schwartz and Sprouse, 1994; 1996) and the Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis (MSIH) (Prévost and White, 2000).

The FFFH holds that the functional categories and features are inaccessible to L2 learners after the critical period as instantiation of these categories has ceased to operate due to the partial availability of Universal Grammar (UG). Therefore, the interlanguage (IL) syntactic representations in post-critical period L2 acquisition diverge from the target grammar despite apparent native-like performance (Hawkins and Chan, 1997). On the other hand, the MSIH claims that the functional categories and features are accessible to L2 learners; however, their failure to produce the required overt morphology is due to complexity in mapping between surface forms and underlying abstract features. Thus, the IL syntactic representations in post critical period L2 acquisition can be native-like and the lack of morphological forms in the IL reflects a problem with the realization of surface morphology, rather than impairment in the domain of functional representations (Prévost and White, 2000). The third proposal, the FTFA hypothesis proposes that the functional categories and features are accessible to L2 learners after the critical period. The L2 learners start out with the parameter settings instantiated in their L1 grammars (full transfer) and that they can subsequently reset parameters to the target L2 settings (due to the full accessibility of UG). Therefore, their IL representations can be native-like due to convergence on native-like representations (Schwartz and Sprouse 1994; 1996).

Altogether, 240 adult L1 Arabic speakers of L2 English participated in the study. They were subdivided into three proficiency levels (lower-intermediate, upper-intermediate

and advanced). The test instruments consisted of the Oxford Placement Test (OPT), two judgement tasks, a Grammaticality Judgement Task on tense and agreement (GJT1) and a Grammaticality Judgement Task on verb movement (GJT2), and two production tasks, an Elicited Written Production Task (EWPT) and an Oral Production Task (ORPT). These tasks were designed to test the learners' underlying knowledge of English past and non-past tense and agreement as well as the placement of verbs with three of the properties subsumed under the verb movement parameter including negation, adverbs and subject floating quantifiers, in finite and non-finite contexts with thematic, *be* auxiliary and copula *be* verb forms.

The findings suggest that while the Arabic speakers were able to acquire the surface structure of the English tense and agreement, they nevertheless had not acquired the underlying associated features. Such findings are consistent with the view that parameterized functional features are subject to a critical period. Accordingly, the IL of the Arabic speakers is non-target like in the syntactic domain, particularly with those functional categories and associated features not instantiated in the L2 learners' L1. These findings seem to show that the learners' IL grammars are UG-constrained, although UG is only partially available to adult L2 learners; that is, the L2 learners' IL, specifically that of the functional features, is constrained by what is available in the learners' L1.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

PEMEROLEHAN CIRI SISTEM KALA DAN KESERASIAN LAMPAU DAN BUKAN-LAMPAU AYAT BAHASA INGGERIS OLEH PENUTUR ARAB BAHASA PERTAMA (L1) DEWASA

Oleh

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Kajian ini menyelidiki pemerolehan ciri morfosintaksis bahasa Inggeris dari segi kala lampau dan bukan lampau, serta keserasian ayat oleh penutur Arab L1 dewasa dalam lingkungan kerangka Program Minimalis. Lebih khusus, fokus utama adalah pada pemerolehan ciri fungsional verbal sistem kala dan keserasian ayat (T dan Agr), ciri formal [\pm finit, \pm lampau, \pm keserasian,], kekuatan ciri keserasian ayat [\pm kuat], serta ciri pergerakan kata kerja yang menjelaskan penempatan kata kerja yang berkaitan dengan penafian, adverba dan kuantifier terapung dalam konteks finit dan bukan finit bertematik, auxiliari *be* dan bentuk kata kerja kopula *be*. Morfem yang dikaji ialah morfem keserasian orang ketiga singular *-s*, morfem keserasian kala lampau *-ed*, kala lampau tak nalar dan auxiliari *be* dan bentuk kata kerja kopula *is*, *am*, *are*, *was* dan *were*. Kajian ini menguji tiga proposal yang bersaing tentang representasi kategori fungsional dan ciri pemerolehan L2: Hipotesis Ciri Fungsional Gagal (FFFH) (Hawkins

dan Chan, 1997), Hipotesis Akses Penuh Pindah Penuh (FTFA) (Schwartz dan Sprouse, 1994; 1996) dan Hipotesis Infleksi Permukaan Tertinggal (MSIH) (Prevost dan White, 2000).

FFFH menetapkan bahawa kategori fungsional dan ciri tidak dapat diakses kepada pelajar L2 selepas zaman kritikal kerana penyegeraan pemerolehan kedua-dua kategori telah terhapus disebabkan kewujudan separa Tatabahasa Universal (UG). Oleh itu, representasi sintaktik bahasa antara (IL) pada zaman pascakritikal pemerolehan L2 menyimpang daripada tatabahasa sasaran walaupun berprestasi seperti penutur natif (Hawkins dan Chan, 1997). Sebaliknya, Hipotesis FTFA mencadangkan bahawa kategori fungsional dan ciri dapat diakses kepada pelajar L2 selepas zaman kritikal. Pelajar L2 bermula dengan penetapan parameter yang diperkenalkan dalam tatabahasa L1 mereka (pindah penuh) dan mereka seterusnya dapat menetapkan semula parameter kepada penetapan L2 sasaran (disebabkan keaksesan penuh Tatabahasa Universal). Oleh itu, representasi bahasa antara mereka didapati seperti penutur natif disebabkan konvergensi terhadap representasi seperti penutur natif (Schwartz dan Sprouse 1994; 1996). Proposal yang ketiga, MSIH, menuntut bahawa kategori fungsional dan ciri dapat diakses kepada pelajar L2; namun, kegagalan mereka untuk menghasilkan morfologi overt yang diperlukan disebabkan kekompleksan mapping antara bentuk permukaan dan ciri abstrak yang mendasarinya. Oleh itu, representasi sintaktik bahasa antara pada zaman pascakritikal pemerolehan L2 kelihatan seperti penutur natif dan kekurangan bentuk morfologi bahasa antara menggambarkan masalah yang berkaitan dengan realisasi morfologi permukaan, bukan daripada ketidaksempurnaan domain representasi fungsional (Prevost dan White, 2000)

Sebanyak 240 penutur Arab L1 dewasa, yang bahasa kedua nya (L2) bahasa Inggris terlibat dalam kajian ini. Mereka dibahagikan kepada tiga aras kemahiran (pertengahan rendah, pertengahan tinggi dan tinggi). Instrumen ujian terdiri daripada dua tugas penilaian, Tugas Penilaian Ketatabahasaan tentang kala dan keserasian (GJTI) dan Tugas Penilaian Ketatabahasaan tentang pergerakan kata kerja (GJT2), dan dua tugas penghasilan, Tugas Penghasilan Bertulis (EWPT) dan Tugas Penghasilan Oral (ORPT). Tugas ini dihasilkan untuk menguji pengetahuan bahasa Inggris pelajar dari segi kala lampau dan bukan lampau dan keserasian serta penempatan kata kerja dengan tiga sifat yang telah berada di bawah parameter pergerakan kata kerja ,termasuk penafian, adverba dan kuantifier terapung, konteks finit dan tak finit bertematik, auxiliari *be* dan bentuk kata kerja kopula *be*.

Dapatan kajian memperlihatkan bahawa walaupun penutur Arab dapat memperoleh struktur permukaan sistem kala dan keserasian ayat bahasa Inggris, mereka sebenarnya tidak dapat memperoleh ciri berkaitan yang mendasarinya. Hasil dapatan ini adalah selaras dengan pandangan bahawa ciri fungsional yang berparameter bergantung kepada zaman kritikal. Didapati, bahasa antara (IL) penutur Arab merupakan tatabahasa tanpa-sasaran dalam domain sintaktik, lebih-lebih lagi pada kategori fungsional dan ciri –ciri berkaitan yang tidak terdapat dalam L2 pelajar L1. Hasil dapatan menunjukkan bahawa tatabahasa pelajar bahasa antara merupakan kekangan daripada Tatabahasa Universal, dengan hujah bahawa Tatabahasa Universal merupakan hanya sebahagian yang dapat diperoleh pelajar L2 dewasa, iaitu, bahasa antara pelajar L2 secara umumnya tertumpu pada ciri fungsional yang dikekang oleh ciri yang terdapat pada L1.

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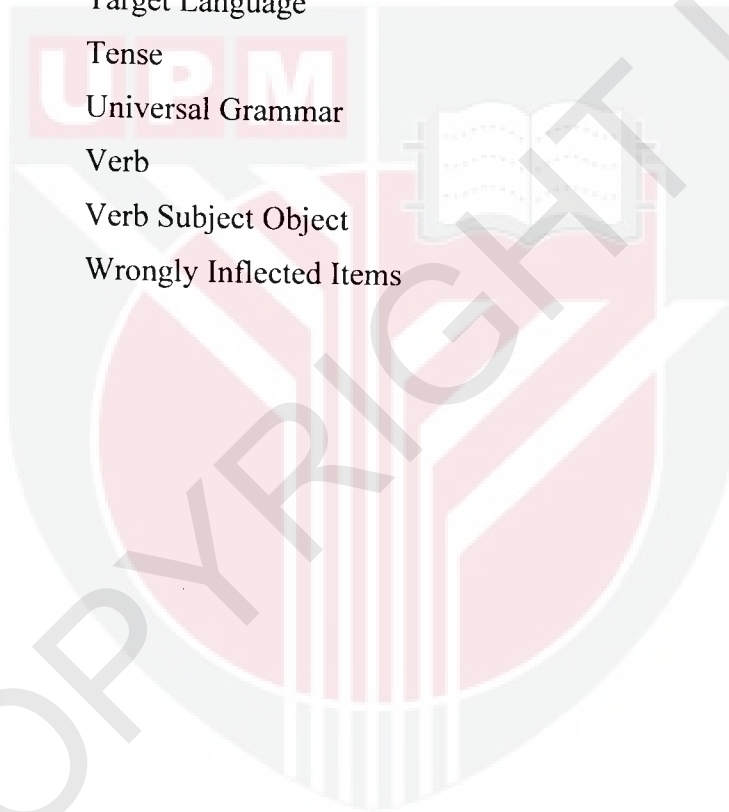
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Adv	Adverb
Agr	Agreement
[±Agr]	Agreement
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
PF	Articulatory-perceptual System or Phonetic Form
CS	Computational System
LF	Conceptual-perceptual System or Logical Form
CP	Critical Period Hypothesis
EWPT	Elicited Written Production Task
FFFH	Failed Functional Features Hypothesis
[±strong]	Feature Strength of T
F	Feminine
[±finite]	Finiteness
L1	First Language
FQ	Floating Quantifier
FTFA	Full Transfer Full Access Hypothesis
GI	Grammatically Inflected Items
GJT1	Grammaticality Judgement Test on Tense and Agreement
GJT2	Grammaticality Judgement Test on Verb Placement
IMP(erf)	Imperfective
Infl	Inflection
IL	Interlanguage
M	Masculine
MP	Minimalist Program
MSIH	Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis
Neg	Negation
N	Noun
OI	Omission Items
ORPT	Oral Production Task

OG	Overgeneration
OPT	Oxford Placement Test
[±past]	Past and Non-past tense
P(erf)	Perfective
PIF	Principle of Full Interpretation
L2	Second Language
S	Singular
Spec	Specifier
SD	Structural Description
SVO	Subject Verb Object
TL	Target Language
T	Tense
UG	Universal Grammar
V	Verb
VSO	Verb Subject Object
WI	Wrongly Inflected Items



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

English is taught as a second language (henceforth L2) in both primary and secondary schools in Yemen. In addition, first and second year undergraduate learners have to learn English as a required course at the university level. It has been observed that after learning English for almost ten years, L2 learners often fail to attain or produce native-like grammar. As a lecturer for a number of years, the writer has observed that L2 learners frequently produce incorrect grammatical forms in speaking and writing, particularly the verbal inflectional morphemes including the past and non-past tense and agreement morphemes as well as the placement of the verb with respect to negation, adverbs and subject floating quantifiers. As the learning of grammar is imperative to the acquisition of L2, it is the intention of this study to investigate the acquisition of the functional categories, the functional features and the feature strength of English verbal morphology by adult L1 Arabic learners of L2 English within the generative framework and to examine the influence of Universal Grammar (henceforth UG) in adult L2 acquisition.

The acquisition of L2 can be studied using one of several approaches or models. One of these is the generative grammar approach. In the context of the generative grammar approach to L2 acquisition, the accessibility of UG is still debated, even though research focus has shifted from UG accessibility to that of the grammatical properties of the interlanguage (henceforth IL) grammars (White, 2003). UG is postulated as a theory of an innate language faculty which consists of invariant

principles for all languages and a finite number of parameters that account for language variation (see e.g. Chomsky, 1980, 1995). Accordingly, language acquisition is assumed to involve setting a small number of parameters and the issue in L2 acquisition is whether UG accessibility is possible for adult L2 learners in the same way as it is for first language (henceforth L1) learners.

Under the current view of the generative theory, that is, the Minimalist Program (henceforth, MP) (Chomsky, 1995), which is the framework adopted in the present study, cross-linguistic variation is a function of the morphological features of lexical items, and the task of language acquisition (native or non-native) is the learning of the formal features and abstract morphological properties associated with lexical items and linking them to the corresponding functional categories (cited in Herschensohn, 2000). During L1 acquisition, features are selected from a universal inventory and are mapped on to the morphemes being acquired. In L2 acquisition, learners are faced with two possibilities to reconfigure their IL grammar to fit the target language grammar: (1) if both languages share the same functional category, the L2 learners must acquire the L2 particular formal features that correspond to that functional category as well as the morphemes to which these features are mapped; (2) if the L2 contains a functional category not found in the L2 learners' L1, the L2 learners must acquire the category in addition to its morphological features.

The acquisition of the functional categories has been a widely researched topic in the generative L1 and L2 literatures. The interest in the L2 acquisition of the functional categories, functional features and feature strength of the verbal inflectional morphology has made available new sets of data from typologically different L1/L2 pairings. Furthermore, new experimental methods have been applied to the study of

L2 morphology, and different theoretical accounts have been proposed to understand the nature of morphological acquisition and processing in an L2 (for reviews, see, for e.g. White, 2003: Chapter 6; Clahsen et al., 2010). One common finding from many studies of L2 morphology is that verbal inflectional morphology can be persistently difficult for L2 learners, particularly for adult learners who had begun learning the L2 after childhood. The L2 learners also exhibit variability in their use of inflectional morphology, with T(ense) and Agr(eement) morphemes which are frequently omitted in their IL. In other words, the realization of overt morphology is in some sense defective (White, 2010: 9). The ‘morphological variability’ (White, 2003: 178; White, 2010: 9) with L2 learners often omitting and sometimes incorrectly using obligatory inflectional morphemes or inappropriately substituting one kind of inflection for another has been reported in many studies (see e.g. Geckin and Haznedar, 2008; Hawkins and Casillas, 2008; McCarthy, 2008; Haznedar, 2003; Ionin and Wexler, 2002, Prévost and White, 2000; Meisel, 1991; Lardiere, 1998, 2000, 2007).

A question that has been debated is whether such variability signifies that L2 learners have impaired or unimpaired functional categories and functional features such as T and Agr in L2 grammar and most importantly whether L2 learners have access or no access to UG. There is also much evidence from past research (e.g. Ionin and Wexler, 2002) that show that by assessing L2 learners’ use and placement of (finite) verbs, the presence and absence of T and Agr can be accounted for in terms of UG. The interpretation of the difficulties and the question of whether defective inflectional morphology necessarily reflects the lack of syntactic representations are, however, still controversial.

Some researchers have assumed that adult L2 learners' non-target-like use of inflectional morphology reflects representational syntactic deficits, which yield incomplete or instable grammars (Smith and Tsimpli, 1995; Hawkins and Chan, 1997; Tsimpli and Dimitrakopoulou, 2007; Hawkins and Casillas, 2008). Hawkins and Chan (1997) propose that these difficulties result from a lack of functional features in the L1 syntax that host inflectional morphemes, an account labelled as the Failed Functional Features Hypothesis (FFFH). According to this account, advanced adult L2 learners have a syntactic deficit; thus they fail to specify some features which are present in functional categories in the target language (henceforth TL). The absence of such features is directly attributable to the L1, that is beyond some critical period¹(CP) in childhood, unselected parameterized features of functional categories cease to be available (Smith and Tsimpli's, 1995).

The FFFH's original assumption claims that in the process of L2 acquisition, a certain subpart of the UG becomes inaccessible to L2 learners if that certain subpart is acquired beyond a CP. Based on Johnson and Newport's (1989: 60-99) study, the CP can be as early as the age of seven. According to Smith and Tsimpli's (1995) assumption, the particular subpart has been identified to be features that are associated with functional categories found in the UG lexicon, which however, may not exist in the L2 learners' L1 inventory after the period has ceased. It is said to be attributed to the disappearance of a layer of options in the UG lexicon which happens to provide options for parameter setting and to determine parametric differences or variations between languages. If the options are not instantiated in the L1, the L2 learners are no longer able to reset the L1 parameter setting into L2 settings nor are

¹ The Critical Period Hypothesis states that the first few years of life constitute the time during which language develops readily and after which language acquisition is much more difficult and ultimately less successful (Siegler, 2006).

they able to transfer the features from their L1 into their L2 inventory. Such features are more appropriately known as parameterized functional features as such features are not necessarily present in all languages; rather they are selected by only certain languages.

Another line of thinking asserts that the instability and variability in the use of inflectional morphemes is specific to L2 production since L2 learners are highly accurate on syntactic properties normally associated with functional categories and features. Lardiere (1998, 2007), for instance, claimed that L2 learners have full and appropriate abstract knowledge of the functional categories and associated functional features, but sometimes fail to realize them in overt morphology, a production-specific problem, also labelled the Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis or MSIH (Prévost and White 2000). The proponents of the MSIH have argued that the presence or absence of morphology on the surface does not necessarily reflect that the underlying functional categories are not intact in L2 learner grammars. In other words, according to this account, representations for verbal inflectional morphology may be fully specified in the L2 grammar, but L2 learners may fail to produce the corresponding overt forms, due to performance limitations resulting from communication pressure (Prévost and White 2000: 129).

A third proposal holds that adult L2 learners exhibit target-like use of inflectional morphology (e.g. Whong-Barr, 2005, White 2003; Schwartz and Sprouse, 1994, 1996, 2000; Duffield and White 1999; Schwartz, 1998). Schwartz and Sprouse (1994, 1996) argue with their Full Transfer Full Access (FTFA) hypothesis that both UG and the L1 grammar are involved in the L2 acquisition. According to this position, the learners start out with the functional categories, associated features and

feature strength of their L1 and are able to acquire L2 categories, features and feature strength. Advocates of the FTFA hypothesis maintain that the starting point of L2 acquisition is the learners' L1 grammar. Subsequently, the received L2 input that cannot be generated by the L1 grammar triggers a restructuring of the system, according to the options of UG (hence the term Full Access). In other words, unselected parameterized features of functional categories which are not instantiated in the L1 are, in principle, acquirable in the L2. However, the FTFA hypothesis claims that target-like use of inflectional morphology is not guaranteed in L2 acquisition and that fossilization may occur in cases where the L2 learners cannot unlearn the L1 property in their L2 due to lack of positive input and consequently do not restructure the grammar.

In order to verify the availability of UG in post-critical period L2 acquisition, the three hypotheses outlined above are tested in order to consider which one is most consistent with the data by looking at the acquisition of the English verbal functional domain (i.e. the functional categories of T and Agr, the functional features and feature strength) by adult L1 Arabic speakers. The following sections of this chapter provide the statement of the problem, the research questions and the purpose of the study. The chapter then discusses the theoretical approach, a version of Chomsky's Minimalist Program and framework adopted for the study. Finally, the chapter sets out the significance of the study and outlines the overall organization of this work.

1.2 Statement of the problem

English is taught as a L2 for almost eight years at the school and the university levels in Yemen. However, the L2 learners fail to achieve native-like competence. Anecdotal observations show that native (Yemeni) Arabic-speaking learners have protracted difficulty acquiring and producing correct grammatical forms in speaking and writing, particularly the English verbal inflectional morphemes including the functional categories of tense and agreement and all related morphosyntactic features (Dickins et al., 2002: 99-100; Jakab 2007: 33-35).

Functional categories are grammatical categories which play a formal role in a sentence and the learning of these categories is essential to the acquisition of L2. The acquisition of functional categories has been a major topic of debate in L1 and L2 acquisition research within the framework of generative grammar (White, 2003). Over the years, generative research has examined the central question of whether L2 acquisition is similar to L1 acquisition by determining the availability of UG to the L2 learner. Various assumptions as to the L2 learners' access to UG as well as the function of L1 in the process of L2 acquisition have also been the focal points of investigation.

As the learning of grammar is crucial to the acquisition of L2 and due to the increasing demands for the use of the English language in education, communication and various other fields, it is important that the L1 Arabic L2 learners of English be competent in the language. Therefore, in order to understand and investigate this matter further, the present study aims to test three proposals, namely the FFFH, the FTFA hypothesis and the MSIH in order to provide characterizations of UG

availability in adult L2 acquisition. It looks at the acquisition of the English functional categories of past and non-past tense and agreement, the associated functional features and feature strength by adult L1 Arabic speakers within the generative framework and examines the availability of UG in the IL of adult L1 Arabic speakers of L2 English. The findings of the study could shed more light on adult learners' L2 acquisition process and contribute to the gap in the body of the L2 acquisition literature, particularly in the Yemeni Arabic context.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to test the predictions made in the FFFH (Hawkins and Chan, 1997), the FTFA hypothesis (Schwartz and Sprouse, 1994; 1996) and the MSIH (Prévost and White, 2000), in order to provide syntactic characterizations of the availability of UG in post-critical period IL of adult L1 Arabic learners of L2 English and to determine which of the three hypotheses the findings of this study are consistent with. The study seeks to investigate post-critical period L2 acquisition of the English morphosyntactic features of the verbal functional domain from the generative perspective. The main aim of this study is to: (a) determine the theoretical view that is able to explain the fact concerning why adult L1 Arabic learners exhibit variability in their use of English verbal inflectional morphology (i.e. why they produce tense and agreement morphemes variably), most of which are widely confirmed by the L2 literature, (b) address the issue of how syntactic structures and verbal morphology are interacted and whether defective morphology necessarily reflects the lack of syntactic representations and (c) visualize the nature of the adult L1 Arabic learners' IL grammar at the L2 ultimate attainment level. To achieve these

goals and to further contribute to the ongoing scenario in L2 acquisition, we investigate the acquisition of the English morphosyntactic features of past and non-past tense and agreement including the verbal functional categories of T and Agr, the formal features of [\pm finite, \pm past, \pm Agr] and the feature strength of T [\pm strong] that account for the placement of the verb with respect to negation, adverbs and subject floating quantifiers (FQs) in finite and non-finite contexts with thematic, copula *be* and *be* auxiliary verbs. Specifically, the present study focuses on the acquisition of four English morphemes, namely the third person singular *-s*, the regular past tense *-ed* and the irregular past tense specified with the ablaut² feature, the *be* auxiliary and the copula *be* verb forms by L1-Arabic-speaking learners of English.

Considering the predictions made by the three hypotheses, two major points differentiate them, that is the extent to which UG constrains IL representation and the extent of the engagement of L1 grammar. As a modest attempt to contribute to the body of L2 acquisition and to verify the extent to which UG and L1 constrain the IL of the L1 Arabic speakers, this study examines the consistency of the claims that (1) the partial inaccessibility of UG is due to the post critical period inaccessibility of parameterized functional features which are not instantiated in adult L2 learners' L1, i.e. those parameterized functional features not instantiated in L1 will permanently fail in L2, and (2) the full accessibility of UG is due to the accessibility of parameterized functional features which are not instantiated in adult L2 learners' L1, i.e. those parameterized functional features not instantiated in L1 will nonetheless be acquirable in L2. This view holds that UG in its entirety constrains L2 acquisition and that L2 learners are able to reset parameters from their L1 value to the L2 setting.

² The process of ablaut is a vowel change accompanying a change in grammatical function. For example, the vowel change from [I] to [æ] in *sing* (non-past), to *sang* (past) is referred to as an *ablaut* (Embick and Marantz, 2005: 244).

1.4 Research Questions

In light of the above discussion and in order to examine the consistency of the FFFH, the FTFA Hypothesis and the MSIH in relation to the acquisition of past and non-past tense and agreement verbal inflectional morphology as well as the acquisition of three of the properties subsumed under the verb movement parameter in English, namely negation, adverbs and subject floating quantifiers by adult L1 Arabic speakers, this study intends to address the following research questions:

1. Given exposure to the English language, to what extent can the adult L1 Arabic speakers acquire English:

- a) thematic verb forms involving the features of [+finite, -past, +Agr] (i.e. the third person non-past tense agreement marker *-s*)?
- b) thematic verb forms involving the features of [+finite, +past, +Agr] (i.e. the regular past tense agreement marker *-ed*)?
- c) thematic verb forms involving the features of [+finite, +past, +Agr] (i.e. irregular past tense involving a vowel change to the root of the verb or *ablaut*)?
- d) *be* auxiliary and copula *be* verb forms involving the features of [+finite, -past, +Agr] (i.e. *am, is, are*)?
- e) *be* auxiliary and copula *be* verb forms involving the features of [+finite, +past, +Agr] (i.e. *was, were*)?

2. Given exposure to the English language:

- a) Do adult L1 Arabic speakers of L2 English acquire *be* auxiliary and copula *be* verb forms prior to the inflectional morphemes of the *in situ* thematic verbs (i.e.

- the third person morpheme *-s*, the past tense morpheme *-ed* and the irregular past tense specified with the ablaut feature) or vice versa?
- b) Do adult L1 Arabic speakers of L2 English overgenerate *be* forms in structures lacking *be* forms?
- c) To what extent can the adult L1 Arabic speakers of L2 English acquire thematic and *be* verb forms involving the feature of [-past] on the one hand, and the thematic and *be* verb forms involving the feature of [+past] on the other?
3. Given exposure to the English language, to what extent can the adult L1 Arabic speakers of L2 English reset the verb movement parameter and correctly place the verb with respect to:
- a) negation in finite contexts?
- b) negation in non-finite contexts?
- b) adverbs (frequency and manner adverbs) in finite contexts?
- c) subject floating quantifiers in finite contexts?
4. Given exposure to the English language, what is the nature of adult L1 Arabic speakers' past [+past] and non-past [-past] tense and agreement features and feature strength in their IL grammar at the L2 ultimate attainment level? Is there evidence to indicate that the adult L1 Arabic speakers of L2 English have a different underlying representation from native speakers of English? If so, what are these differences?
5. Given exposure to the English language, to what extent are adult L1 Arabic speakers of L2 English able to produce the past [+past] and non-past [-past] tense and agreement verbal inflectional morphology and to reset the verb movement parameter in English? Is there any evidence that adult L1 Arabic speakers of L2 English resort to other mechanism(s) that are different from the native speakers'

production of the same property? In other words, do L2 learners, at ultimate attainment level, reveal a mapping problem at the surface level or do they lack the structural representations altogether—suggesting a lack of native-like competence?

1.5 Theoretical Perspectives

The generative approach to L2 acquisition deserves attention because it forms the backbone for the present study. This is due to its claim that Universal Grammar (UG) guides language acquisition. Section 1.5.1 starts with a brief review of the UG theory and discusses the generative approach to L2 acquisition. Section 1.5.2 defines the current framework within the generative theory of language acquisition, namely the Minimalist Program (MP) (Chomsky, 1995). In addition, the notions of functional categories and formal features will be discussed within the same framework.

1.5.1 Universal Grammar and L2 Acquisition

Language acquisition is a species-specific behaviour, possessed only by human beings (e.g. Chomsky, 1957). This view postulates an innate biologically endowed language faculty in the human brain in which knowledge of language, the tacit knowledge of the grammar of language or the language competence is stored (Chomsky, 2000: 2-4). The language faculty helps humans to acquire and to produce the language (Radford, 2009: 19). This language faculty is located in the left hemisphere of the brain in a modular form that consists of interacting modules (Hawkins and Chan, 1997: 188).

In knowing only the physical form of the language faculty gives no further information about the nature of language itself and neither does it tell us about the language acquisition and production processes that occur in it. Therefore, beginning from the 1950s, a theory known as Universal Grammar (UG) was postulated by Chomsky to describe the constitution of language knowledge, and to explain the language acquisition and production interactions that take place in the language faculty. Cook (1997: 262) states that,

Universal Grammar is the black box responsible for language acquisition. It is the mechanism in the mind which allows children to construct grammar out of raw language materials supplied by their parents.

In other words, UG is grammatical theory that postulates that all languages have underlying principles of grammar. These underlying principles are said to be innate to all human beings (Chomsky, 2000: 122). However, this theory does not attempt to claim that all human languages have the same grammar. Rather, UG proposes that there exists an underlying set of rules that helps children to acquire their particular language(s) (Radford, 2009: 19-21)³. The theory was specifically proposed to describe and to explain the acquisition of the L1 by young children. It was not used to describe and to explain the acquisition of L2 by children after the age of seven (post-critical period as proposed by Johnson and Newport, 1989; 1991) and adults. Such a task was taken up by the L2 acquisition researchers.

The distinction made between L1 and L2 acquisition is due to the fact that L2 acquisition seems to be different from the acquisition of L1 especially after the critical period (Towell and Hawkins, 1994: 2). This is because L1 is the language one has developed from birth and the language that is closely intertwined with the

³ For a more detailed explanation on UG principles and parameters, please refer to the book *Analysing English Sentences: A Minimalist Approach* by Radford, 2009, Chapter One: 19-26.

development of cognition, i.e. L1 acquisition is an effortless, rapid and uniform process. In contrast, L2 acquisition is a lengthy, highly idiosyncratic and difficult as well as incomplete process which L2 acquisition theorists claim can take up to seven or more years for a learner to develop proficiency, depending on the age (Alvares, 2003: 157).

In L2 acquisition, some phenomena that characterized the behaviour of L2 learners can be observed. Such phenomena are found in all kinds of L2 data, irrespective of the L1/L2 pairings. Towell and Hawkins (1994) present as the main observable phenomena of L2 acquisition, subconscious transfer, staged development, systematicity, variability and incompleteness. These phenomena will be discussed briefly below⁴.

Subconscious transfer is a striking feature of L2 acquisition. It refers to the transfer of grammatical properties from L1 mental grammar into the mental grammar that learners construct for the L2 (Towell and Hawkins, 1994: 7)⁵. L2 learners in general do not acquire properties of the L2 immediately, but go through a series of “transitional stages” towards the target language (TL). This phenomenon is known as staged development (Towell and Hawkins, 1994: 10-11). Along with these phenomena, there is systematicity across L2 learners in the way that knowledge about the L2 being learned grows. In other words, learners from different L1 backgrounds develop L2 linguistic knowledge in a way that is not directly attributable either to their L1, or to the L2 input (Towell and Hawkins, 1994: 11-12).

⁴ For a detailed explanation, please refer to the book *Approaches to Second Language Acquisition* by Towell and Hawkins, 1994, Chapter One: 7-16.

⁵ Transfer seems to affect all linguistic levels from phonetics to discourse (see for example, Oldin, 1989; Selinker, Swain and Dumas, 1975; Dulay and Burt, 1993; Selinker, 1983; Riley, 1981; Zobl, 1984; White, 1986; in Towell and Hawkins, 1994: 7-10).

But in the midst of this systematicity, L2 learners are also said to have a remarkable amount of variability in the intuitions and production of the L2 at various stages of the development. That is, the mental grammar of L2 learners at certain stages of development appear to allow more than one structural variant for a given construction where the TL has only one form (Towell and Hawkins, 1994: 13).

The majority of L2 learners also seem to show incompleteness in the grammatical knowledge about the L2 attained in relation to native speakers of the TL (Towell and Hawkins, 1994: 14). The major factor which is influential in determining the degree of success in attaining native-like judgements is the age at which the learner is first exposed consistently to the L2, i.e. the older an L2 learner is when first consistent exposure starts, the more errors (s)he makes, indicating a progressive failure to acquire native-like grammatical knowledge (Johnson and Newport, 1989: 60-99).

Being aware of the above phenomena, L2 acquisition researchers have tried to formulate hypotheses in order to explain them. However, the predictions made by most of these hypotheses did not seem to be borne out in practice. The shortcomings of earlier approaches constitute a major impetus for L2 researchers to change the direction of interest since the 1980s. They began studying the extent of the availability of UG, specifically principles and parameters in L2 acquisition (Cook and Newson, 2007: 221). Since then hypotheses have been formulated in order to describe the role of UG in L2 acquisition especially among adults (White, 2003).

The formulation of these hypotheses about the role of UG in L2 acquisition is said to be due to some of the differences in the developmental as well as the production aspects between L1 and L2 acquisition. Mitchell and Myles (2004) argue that L2 acquisition is different in many ways from L1 acquisition. The L2 learners are

cognitively mature and have a powerful system of general abstract problem-solving skills (p.78). They also know (at least) one language and they have different motivations for learning (compared to L1 learners, where language learning takes place in order to answer the basic human need to communicate) (p.78).

Most of the researchers assume that UG guides the acquisition of the L1; however, there is a debate as to whether access to UG in L2 acquisition is similar to that in L1 acquisition. Even though the role of UG within the generative grammar approach to L2 acquisition is still contested, the research concern has shifted from verifying the availability of UG to L2 learners to that of the grammatical properties of IL grammars (White, 2003). As a result, three logical hypotheses have been proposed concerning the role of UG in L2 acquisition. The first, the no access hypothesis, claims that no aspect of UG is available to the L2 learner. The second is the partial access hypothesis which states that only L1-instantiated principles and L1-instantiated parameter values of UG are available to the L2 learner. According to the third, the full access hypothesis, UG in its entirety constrains L2 acquisition (see White, 2003; Mitchell and Myles, 2004: 84-89). Two fundamental issues differentiate these views, namely, the extent to which UG constrains IL representation and the extent of the presumed involvement of L1 grammar (White, 2003). Both UG and L1 are considered "complementary sources of knowledge that guide IL development" (Montrul, 2000: 232).

Researchers have relatively little idea of what makes particular L1 linguistic forms more vulnerable in the L2 acquisition process, what triggers restructuring at different stages of IL development, or what L2 grammars at ultimate attainment level look like. Substantial empirical evidence confirms that UG principles constrain IL systems

(White, 2000, 2003; Schwartz, 2003) and that such systems resemble the TLs in most respects even if they are not identical or perfectly complete (Herschensohn, 2000). Consequently, due to the grammatical nature of ILs, which are "not random concatenations of words" (Herschensohn, 2000: 52) but rather possible human languages and therefore constrained by UG, many L2 acquisition researchers have tested their hypotheses by linking UG and L2 acquisition. Since UG aims to explain the universal traits that characterize all human languages and since the goal of the L2 acquirers is akin to that of the L1 acquirers, that is, to comprehend and produce the TL, then the present study rightly must adopt the most current framework of the generative paradigm, namely the Minimalist Program (MP) of the UG approach in relation to L2 acquisition as in Chomsky (1995).

1.5.2 The Minimalist Program

The Minimalist Program (MP) attempts to describe grammars by minimal means without imposing theoretical rules and procedures (Chomsky, 1995). MP looks at the syntax-semantics interface in a new way (Radford, 2009: 14). Accordingly, the meaning of a sentence is derived from the distinctive features of lexical items and the way these items are linked through functional categories. The fundamental idea of MP involves an invariant Computational System (henceforth CS) of human language and the roles of morphological features or features of functional categories, which control parametric differences between languages.

Within the MP approach, UG takes language to consist of a lexicon and a CS (Chomsky, 1995: 6). The lexicon comprises a set of lexical items, each of which is a collection of semantic, phonological, and morphological features. Except for the

semantic features which are assumed to be rather invariant across languages, the phonological and morphological features vary from one language to another. Thus, according to MP, except for phonological contrasts, it may be possible to reduce all grammatical differences to the properties of functional categories. With respect to language acquisition, MP states that since the CS is the same in all languages, learning a given language involves acquiring a correct set of functional category features as well as developing a sense of the general properties of the language lexicon by exposure to the primary linguistic data. In other words, learning the morphological features of lexical items is the central clue to language acquisition, both first and second (Dekydtspotter et al., 1997; Herschensohn, 2000, 2001).

The essence of MP (Chomsky, 1995) as compared to the earlier versions of the generative approach (Government and Binding (1980s) and Principles and Parameters (1986)) is that the MP has done away with the syntactic structural levels of D(eep)-structure and S(urface)-structure. Therefore, only two interface levels are left, namely, Logical Form (LF) and Phonetic Form (PF). The LF can be accessed by the conceptual-perceptual system (system of thought) and the PF by the articulatory-perceptual system (sensorimotor system) (Radford, 2009: 14).

For each linguistic expression obtained from a computational process, there exists as a pair of the interface levels (PF and LF) (Chomsky, 1995: 225)⁶. The LF and PF consist of items drawn from the lexicon, and generative theory relates these components through a derivation. Chomsky argues that LF is a step in the derivation when the structure receives semantic representation. PF is a level where the same structure is assigned a phonetic representation.

⁶ For a detailed explanation, please refer to the book *The Minimalist Program* by Chomsky, N., 1995, Chapter Four: 225-264.

According to Chomsky (1995:226), semantic information is not allowed to appear at PF and phonetic information is not allowed to appear at LF. If the regulation is violated, the derivation is said to have crashed⁷ at the particular interface level. This is because for a structure description (henceforth SD) to be grammatical, it must converge at both LF and PF. The rationale that the PF representation can only carry features which are phonetically interpretable while the LF representation can only carry features which are semantically interpretable upon arriving at the interface levels is to satisfy the requirement of the Principle of Full Interpretation (PIF) (Chomsky, 1995: 171). The PIF specifies that “a representation for a given expression must contain all and only those elements which contribute directly to its interpretation at a relevant level” (Radford, 1997:171).

Therefore, before the SD arrives at the interface levels, the phonetic and semantic features need to be separated into two representations which are the PF representation and the LF representation (Radford, 2009: 14). An operation known as Spell-Out happens and separates the phonetic features from the semantic features in the SD so that only the phonetic information will appear as the PF representation in order to converge at the PF interface level, and only the semantic information will appear as the LF representation to converge at the LF interface level (Boeckx, 2008: 47-48). With this, the derivation is said to converge at the interface levels⁸.

⁷ A derivation is said to crash if one or more features carried by one or more constituents diverge at either or both of the interface levels (the phonetics interface and the semantics interface). For example, “if the person or number feature of *have* remain unvalued in a sentence such as *He have left*, the resulting sentence will crash at the phonetics interface, since the PF component will be unable to determine whether *have* should be spelled out as *have* or *has*”. (Radford, 2009: 452)

⁸ The Spell-Out operation is applicable only to semantic and phonetic features but not to the grammatical (functional) features (Chomsky, 1995: 230-231).

Under minimalism, Chomsky (1995) proposes that functional categories dominate lexical categories and that each syntactic operation is basically a movement of functional features which are [+/-strong]. Additionally, Chomsky defined formal features as those morphological features that are encoded in each lexical item and functional head and that include categorial features (e.g., [\pm N], [\pm V]), ϕ -features (phi features), case features and feature strength. According to Chomsky (1995: 240), these formal features can be either intrinsic features (obligatory), which are automatically assigned in the lexicon or optional features, which are language specific and are added arbitrarily as the lexical item enters the numeration⁹.

Chomsky also distinguishes between [\pm interpretable] features in that [-interpretable] features do not have semantic content and are not relevant for interpretation at LF while [+interpretable] features have semantic content and play a role of meaning interpretation at LF, that is "legible to the external systems at the interface" (Chomsky, 1998: 7). Interpretability at LF is closely linked to feature strength, feature checking and syntactic movement.

Feature checking involves checking [-interpretable] features carried by verbs against corresponding features encoded in inflectional categories before they arrive at the interface levels¹⁰. According to Chomsky (1993, in Ouhalla, 1999: 433), verbs are said to be inflected for features in the lexicon and are being inserted into derivations already inflected rather than in their bare form. The [+strong] features are unable to survive at the PF level without causing the derivation to crash or being

⁹ Numeration is a selection of lexical items involved in building a given sentence plus an indication of how many times they are to be included in a structure, which constitutes the starting point of the structure-building process (Cook and Newson, 2007: 254)

¹⁰ Checking occurs between compatible checkers and checked elements. The compatible checkers are features at the head position or slot of a phrase while the checked elements are basically features at the specifier position or slot and the complement position or slot of a phrase (Radford, 2009: 14).

ungrammatical. Therefore, such features must be checked before the Spell-Out. Meanwhile, it is postulated that the [-strong] features are allowed to appear at the PF level because they are invisible at this level and so will not cause a crash, even if they appear (Chomsky, 1995: 216).

Such features are checked after Spell-Out. That is to say, whether checking is done before or after Spell-Out is determined by the nature of the feature, either it is [+strong] (needs to be checked before Spell-out and is able to trigger movement, and the movement is said to be overt) or [-strong] (checked after Spell-Out and is unable to trigger movement, and the movement is said to be covert) (Chomsky, 1995: 240). In sum, [-interpretable] grammatical features are erased after the checking process whereas [+interpretable] grammatical features remain after the checking process.

After the necessary movements have taken place, i.e. after the PF has been successfully separated from the other information by the Spell-Out operation and the [-interpretable] grammatical features have been checked away, the LF information will converge at the LF interface and the PF information will converge at the PF interface without having any irrelevant information. By having the whole derivation converge at both LF and PF, the requirement of the PIF is satisfied, and a grammatical structure is the result. If this does not happen, the derivation is said to have crashed causing the structure to become ungrammatical (see Chomsky, 1995, chapter four: 276-90).

According to the MP, the strength of the morphological features and the properties of lexical items, in particular, functional categories and related features are the locus of cross-linguistic variation. Although the inventory of functional categories is defined by UG, not all functional categories are instantiated in every language. In other

words, languages differ as to which functional categories and features are present and instantiated. Consequently, the task of language acquisition may involve learning these features and linking them to the corresponding functional categories.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

Language acquisition (native or non-native) means setting all the parameters of UG appropriately (Cook and Newson, 2007: 59). Among current theories on the acquisition of functional categories in post-critical period L2 acquisition, a major distinction can be made among theories that contend that there is no access to UG, those that claim that access to UG is partial and those that maintain that there is full access to UG.

Researchers like Beck (1998), Meisel (1991, 1997) Eubank (1993/1994) and Clahsen, (1988) claim that functional categories and features are not accessible to adult L2 learners and hence UG is not involved in the L2 acquisition as it atrophies with age and adult learners have to use other general learning strategies. As their IL grammars are not constrained by UG, adult L2 learners do not have access to parameter settings. They suffer a deficit or some kind of impairment at the level of functional categories and associated features, which is referred to in the Impairment Representation Hypothesis (IRH). Such impairment allows L2 learners to exhibit properties that are unlike any natural language¹¹.

¹¹ Assuming global impairment, Meisel (1997) argued that L2 grammars completely lack agreement, and that verb placement is not related to finiteness. He considered that L2 learners' ILs are not constrained by UG but rather that L2 adults make use of linear sequencing strategies. In a less extreme view, Beck (1998) and Eubank (1993/1994) suggested local impairment. Both stated that feature strength is impaired in L2 interlanguage, and that the IL is not constrained by UG, so L2 learners' IL could be rogue grammars. In the Fundamental difference hypothesis (FDH), Bley-Vroman (1990) also

Meanwhile, there are researchers who claim that access to UG in adult L2 acquisition is partial (e.g. Tsimpli and Roussou 1991; Smith and Tsimpli 1995; Hawkins and Chan, 1997; Wong and Hawkins 2000; Wong 2002; Hawkins and Franceschina, 2004; Hawkins, 2000, 2003; Hawkins and Liszka, 2003; Tsimpli, 2003; Hawkins and Hattori, 2006; Tsimpli and Dimitrakopoulou, 2007; Hawkins and Casillas, 2008). They argue that the acquisition of functional categories, functional features and parameter setting are subject to a critical period, in which categories and formal features not instantiated in the L1 grammar are not available to the L2 learners post-critical period for instantiation has stopped to function. All other aspects of UG including principles are still available. The partial access hypothesis predicts full transfer of L1 in the L2 initial state and rejects “the possibility of UG restructuring in the L2 development” in which new uninterpretable features of functional categories will “fail” permanently in L2 grammars.

The no-parameter resetting or the Failed Functional Features Hypothesis (FFFH) assumption espoused by Hawkins and Chan (1997) has been used to describe and explain the language produced by L2 learners who fail to show native-like competence despite exposure to a number of phenomena, including WH-movement in relative clauses (Hawkins and Chan, 1997, Wong, 2002), [past] features on T (Hawkins and Liszka, 2003), gender concord (Hawkins and Franceschina, 2004) and sensitivity to subjacency and superiority in WH-movement (Hawkins and Hattori, 2006). The predictions that follow from the FFFH proposal is that L2 learners whose L1 exhibits different functional feature specifications from those of L2 will not fully acquire the same representation as native speakers of the L2. Accordingly, this

supposed that there is no access to UG for L2 adult learners, as access to UG is subject to a critical period. Hence, L2 learners rely on the parameters posited for their L1 or they resort to domain-general problem-solving skills (i.e., strategies).

explains the observation that many L2 learners never fully attain L1 competence as native speakers do despite extensive length of exposure to the L2. Another prediction that follows from FFFH, is that L2 learners, whose L1 grammar exhibits similar functional feature specifications as those of the L2, will approximate quite closely to the L2 grammar as exposure to L2 increases.

The full access approach theorists (e.g. Epstein, Flynn, and Martohardjono 1996; Grondin and White 1996; Lakshmanan and Selinker 1994; Schwartz and Sprouse 1994, 1996, 2000; Vainikka and Young-Scholten 1994, 1996; White 1996, 2003; Schwartz, 1998; White and Bruhn de Garavito 2003; Duffield et al. 2002; Unsworth, 2005; Chu and Schwartz, 2005; Whong-Barr, 2005) argue that functional categories, functional features, and feature specifications associated with functional categories are acquirable in adult L2 acquisition, i.e. L1 and L2 acquisition are basically similar processes and there is no critical period for instantiation of principle and parameters settings of L2. In other words, the principles of UG are available to L2 learners throughout the initial state, intermediate state and steady state in which the initial state of the L2 learners is the structure of the L1 where new functional categories and features are attainable and in principle, it is possible for the learners to re-set parameters and reach native-like competence in the L2. The predictions that follow from Schwartz and Sprouse's (1994, 1996) Full Transfer Full Access (FTFA) hypothesis is that unselected parameterized features of functional categories which are not instantiated in the L1 are, in principle, acquirable in the L2. The L2 learner's L1 grammar (including L1 parameter settings) constitutes the starting point of the L2 acquisition. In other words, parameter resetting is then possible in L2 acquisition because the L2 learners have access to UG in its entirety.

However, critical to the issue of full access to UG is that L2 input underdetermines the IL grammar (Schwartz and Sprouse, 2000). Many proponents of the full access approach (e.g. Schwartz and Sprouse 1994, 1996, 2000; Lardiere 1998, 2000; Prévost and White 1999, 2000; White 2003) claim that despite having a fully specified and accurate syntactic representation of the L2, L2 learners, even the advanced ones show performance problems particularly with affixal morphology of tense. Explanations for these problems include the Mapping problem by Lardiere (1998, 2000) and the Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis (MSIH) by Prévost and White (2000). The prediction that follows from the MSIH proposal is that, contrary to the predictions of the FFFH, no impairment within MSIH is attributed to functional categories and functional features at an abstract level. The prediction is that the verbal inflectional morphology can be acquired and the feature strength can be reset and, as a consequence, exhibits a systematic use though not completely error free, due to difficulty in mapping surface forms to abstract features arising from communication pressure or processing demands. Prévost and White (2000) explain the mapping problem by adopting the Distributed Morphology (DM) stance (Halle and Marantz, 1993). The DM attempts to make precise the claim that all derivations are syntactic. With respect to the interface between syntax and morphology, this architecture has a clear consequence: since the only mode of combination in the grammar is syntactic, it follows that in the default case, morphological structure simply is syntactic structure (pp. 114-20). The implied prediction here is that the problem of the presence of some inconsistencies cannot be attributed to presence or absence of certain features in L1 (see Chapter 2: Section 2.6 for more details).

Specifically, three hypotheses with respect to the characterization of L2 acquisition in post-critical period (as postulated by Johnson and Newport, 1989) non-native IL

namely, the FFFH, the FTFA hypothesis and the MSIH can be distinguished. The predictions about IL representation and approximation to the target L2 grammar posited by the three hypotheses are summarized in the table below:

Table 1: A Summary of the Predictions of the FFFH, the FTFAH and the MSIH

Hypothesis	Prediction
FFFH	IL representations in post-critical period L2 acquisition diverge from the target grammar despite apparent native-like performance (Hawkins and Chan, 1997).
FTFA	IL representations in post-critical period L2 acquisition can be native-like due to convergence on native-like representations (Schwartz and Sprouse 1994; 1996).
MSIH	IL syntactic properties in post-critical period L2 acquisition can be native-like, however, the lack of (or the variable use of) morphological forms in the IL representations reflects a problem with the realization of surface morphology, rather than an impairment in the domain of functional representations (including functional features and feature strength) (Prévost and White, 2000).

The main goal of this study is to test these hypotheses against data collected from adult L1 Arabic speakers of L2 English. A detailed description of each of these hypotheses is provided in the Chapter Two.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study derives its significance from the significance of the topic it addresses. The fact that it attempts to explore the acquisition of the functional categories of English tense and agreement morphology as well as the acquisition of three verb movement properties including negation, adverbs and floating quantifiers by adult L1 Arabic speakers of L2 English within the generative framework may add another perspective to the current literature in the domain of L2 research by providing syntactic characterizations of the availability of UG in adult L2 acquisition. It is hoped that the

findings and their implications will contribute to the explanation of L2 acquisition phenomena, which may then contribute to an overall theory on how L2 syntactic knowledge is acquired, particularly with regard to the L1 Arabic learners.

In addition, this study may also add to the knowledge about learning a second language or second languages which will benefit teachers as well as L2 learners especially the adults. Teachers can prepare appropriate and more effective teaching methods for the teaching of the syntactic structures discussed in this study while learners can learn or adopt new learning strategies to learn the English past and non-past tense and agreement morphology and the verb movement parameter with respect to negation, adverbs and subject floating quantifiers (see e.g. Hawkins, 2005).

1.8 Outline of the Thesis

The organization of the thesis is as follows. Chapter One conceptualizes the study by providing a general background as well as the theoretical framework of the study. Chapter Two critically reviews previous studies that are related to the study. The chapter is divided into three parts: Introduction, Review and Conclusion. Chapter Three discusses the linguistic assumptions adopted for the study. It discusses the grammatical properties being studied of the two languages, i.e. the English language and the Arabic language. This chapter not only introduces but it also discusses, analyses and compares the two languages in terms of their verb phrases, tense and agreement, and the verb movement parameter. Chapter Four describes the methods and procedures used in the study. This includes a write-up of the profile of the participants, the size of sample, instrumentation used, as well as the data collection

and data analysis procedures of the study. Next, Chapter Five reports on the results of the data collected, and it discusses the findings of this study. Finally, Chapter Six concludes the overall study by providing a conclusion and implications of the findings. It also provides suggestions for further studies.



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