Abstract

Interference of the mother tongue is a serious problem that faces most learners of foreign languages. Even advanced learners may have great difficulty in eradicating mistakes that occur as a result of negative transfer. Number agreement between Classical Arabic and Standard English is an area that might be affected by this interference. This paper attempts to compare and contrast the structure of number agreement in both languages and thus to predict areas of difficulty for learners. It also intends to investigate the sources of errors of number agreement whether they occur as a result of a negative transfer or in some cases due to other sources of errors. The sample of the study consisted of 30 Sudanese learners of English in their first year in the Department of English, Faculty of Arts- University of Khartoum. Written test was the instrument used to collect the data for the study. Similarities and differences between the two languages with regard to number agreement were classified. The study confirmed that areas of difference cause difficulties for Sudanese learners of English. Many of these errors could perhaps be explained by negative interference and other sources of errors.