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A STUDY OF THE INTERFERENCE OF CLASSICAL  
AND COLLOQUIAL ARABIC AS A CAUSE  
OF WRITTEN GRAMMATICAL  
MISTAKES IN ENGLISH

By

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To

My Father

And All Ideal Teachers

I dedicate

this work

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## ABSTRACT

Students and teachers of second language have always complained of the difficulties of learning and teaching a foreign language. Linguists have assumed that the reason why students of the foreign language make mistakes in grammar, is that they cannot easily get rid of the habit of thinking in their own language and then translating literally into the foreign language. Contrastive studies of languages revealed that the danger of transferring the native language grammar into the foreign language is due to the differences between the grammatical systems of the languages involved.

The native language of the Iraqi students is Arabic. Arabic exists on two levels, the Classical or the written, and the Colloquial or the spoken. Now, which level interferes in the learning of English as a second language? Do both interfere?

This paper attempts at finding out: (1) whether the native language really acts as a causative factor in the making of written grammatical mistakes in English, (2) the extent of the interference of Classical and Colloquial Arabic, (3) which linguistic pattern is more difficult to learn, the question, negative or statement pattern?

For this purpose, an experiment was devised and was administered in Baghdad by the writer, to the sixth year elementary schools. Its results might help the teacher to a better understanding of the problems of the students in learning English as a second language.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND STUDY

#### The Aims Of The Study

Foreign language teaching is always a matter of teaching a specific language to students who have a specific native language background. The aim of this paper is to study the interference of Classical and Colloquial Arabic as a cause of written grammatical mistakes in English.

#### The Purpose Of The Study

The Study has a fourfold purpose:

- (1) to determine to what extent the linguistic claim of native language interference is valid.
- (2) to determine to what extent the written grammatical mistakes made by Iraqi students learning English are due to interference.
- (3) to determine the extent of the interference of:-
  - (a) Classical Arabic
  - (b) Colloquial Arabic
- (4) to determine what grammatical patterns pose greater learning problems for Iraqi students.

A written test was devised for the purpose, and was administered to sixth grade elementary students in the Government schools of Baghdad. The design of the experiment and the result of the test will be stated

in the following chapters. This chapter will give:

- (1) The Hypothesis upon which the study is built.
- (2) Background study of transfer.
- (3) Theories and problems of second language learning.

Linguistic Assumptions:

The fundamental assumption upon which this study is built is the linguistic claim "that the grammatical structure of the native language tends to be transferred to the foreign language; the student tends to transfer the sentence forms, modification devices, the number gender, and the case patterns of his language."<sup>1</sup> Many linguistic distortions in the students' speech or writing in the foreign language is caused by resorting to some kind of convenient translation in the process of self-expression, "desiring to say or write something in English, they would first think of it in their own language, and then attempt a translation."<sup>2</sup> Learning a foreign language is always a matter of acquiring a new set of language habits against a background of older sets of language habits. Out of habitual arrangement of linguistic forms in the native language, the learner may use the native language grammar in speaking or writing a foreign language. "The use of a grammatical structure by a speaker depends heavily on habit . . . . The average speaker of a language has, from early childhood, reduced practically all the operations of his grammatical system to habit."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Lado, Linguistics Across Cultures (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1957), p.58.

<sup>2</sup>Raja T. Nasr, The Teaching of English to Arab Students (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1963), p.161.

<sup>3</sup>Lado, p.58.

Therefore in learning a foreign language, a student tends to carry the grammatical system of his native language to the newly learned one, due to the habit of using the first language system.

The introduction of foreign grammatical elements in a language results in the "rearrangement of the patterns"<sup>1</sup> in such a way as might obscure the signalling devices of the language system and therefore result in meaningless or wrong utterances.

Interference is "the rearrangement of the patterns that result from the introduction of foreign elements into the more highly structured domain of the language such as the bulk of the phonic system, a large part of the morphology and syntax and some areas of vocabulary."<sup>2</sup>

Linguistic interference then is "those instances of deviation from the norms of either language . . . as a result of familiarity with more than one language."<sup>3</sup>

For the purpose of illustration, let us call the Arabic language A and the English language B. As Weinreich implies as a basis for interference in grammatical relations,<sup>4</sup> the application of the grammatical relations of language A to morphemes of Language B, or the neglect of the grammatical relations of B which has no prototype in A would evidently result in grammatical errors in language B. For instance,

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<sup>1</sup>Uriel Weinreich, Languages in Contact: Findings and Problems (New York: Publications of the Linguistic Circle of New York - No.1, 1953), p.1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.1.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.37.

this sentence: "Was given the girl the book", with Arabic word order pattern of the performer and performed-upon relationship, but applied to English morphemes, is an example of the application of a grammatical relation of word order from language A to morphemes of language B.

Transfer of the relations of one language to another results in wrong grammatical statements. According to Weinreich, this application of the relations of another language may:

(1) Convey unintended meaning; for example; an Arab student says in English 'Donkey Ali' on the model of Arabic /himar Ali/ intending to communicate the message 'Ali's donkey', but producing the opposite effect. Or he might say in English 'boat steam' on the model of Arabic /qaarib bukari/ intending to communicate the message 'steam-boat'.

(2) Produce nonsense or a statement which is understandable only by implication. For example; an Arab student would say in English 'was seen Muna' on the model of Arabic /suuhidat Muna/ meaning, 'Muna was seen'

The non-belonging elements can be separated as "borrowed" or "transferred". This is a manifestation of linguistic interference.

Similarity and Difference as Determiners  
of Ease and Difficulty in Learning  
Foreign Grammatical Structures:

"The greater the difference between the systems, i.e., the

more numerous the mutually exclusive forms and patterns in each, the greater is the learning problem and the potential area of interference."<sup>1</sup>

The structural similarities of two systems would pose no learning problems for the student because they would be easy to learn, and even if transferred to the target language those structures would not cause grammatical errors and would therefore function satisfactorily.

The foreign language student will have more difficulty in learning those structures that are different; they "will be difficult because when transferred they will not function satisfactorily in the foreign language and will therefore have to be changed."<sup>2</sup>

A number of examples taken from The Teaching of English to Arab Students, by Raja Nasr<sup>3</sup> perhaps will illustrate Lado's assumptions: Similar grammatical patterns would cause no learning problems, i.e.,

1. noun + verb

The man walks

Example: /arražulu yamši/

2. (who )  
(which ) + verb  
(what )

Who goes to the market?

Example: /man yaħhabu<sup>7</sup> ila ssuqi?/

3. (what how )  
(when why ) + Be (preterit) + noun (or substitute )  
(where who )

What was his name?

Example: /maaħa kaana smuhu?/

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<sup>1</sup>Weinreich, p.1.

<sup>2</sup>Lado, P.59.

<sup>3</sup>(London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1963), pp.70-89.

There would be no linguistic problems for the Arab student in these patterns. Even if the student were to translate from Arabic, the Arabic grammar would function satisfactorily, because of the similarity of word order in both Arabic and English.

But different grammatical patterns will pose learning problems for the Arab student. The Arab student would say for example, 'where the boy?' on the model of Arabic /'ayna lwaladu /, intending to say 'where is the boy?' The danger of transfer here would be the neglect of the use of be in the present, because it has no prototype in Arabic.

Similarly the Arab student would have difficulty in the following sentence - the Arab student would say for example: 'was she writing' translating from Arabic /kaanat taktubu/, intending to say 'she was writing'. The application of the Arabic grammar word order would result in wrong word order in the English sentence, because Arabic has different word order from English in this given pattern.

The Arab student would also have difficulty in this negative pattern. For example, he would say: 'not the man doctor' on the Arabic model /laysa rraʒulu ṭabiban/, intending to say 'the man is not a doctor'. The mistake here is in word order and the neglect of the use of be in the present. The cause of the mistakes is the interference of the Arabic grammatical relations and word order.

On the whole, "the structural use of word order, of function words, and of inflecting forms in present day English are complicated and difficult for one whose native language is Spanish, Turkish, or

Chinese (or Arabic). The special difficulties differ with the various linguistic backgrounds of the learner."<sup>1</sup> There are such wide differences between English and Arabic that a tremendous number of interference problems pose a heavy learning load for our students.

Psychological Theories and Problems  
Of Second Language Learning:

In psychology, interference is defined as "anything that leads to confusion among learnt materials which decreases the speed and efficiency of learning and accelerates forgetting."<sup>2</sup> When anything is learned, the test for use of that learning usually occurs after a passage of time. In the intervening period many other things are learned. These interpolated learnings interfere with the memory of the original material and their interference is known as retroactive inhibition. This explains the interference of the later learned language on the primary language.

Another kind of interference, and perhaps a more important one for meaningful learning, is proactive inhibition. Many times when something new is learned, it competes with older learnings, so that when the new learning is required, it is distorted by what has gone before. In speaking of this kind of interference, Ausbel concludes that conceptualization involves the building of subsumption systems; systems for categorizing newly learned materials and systems that serve as "storage mechanisms" for our memory. When new materials are not assimilated into the already existing subsumption

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<sup>1</sup>Charles C. Fries, Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1945), p.9.

<sup>2</sup>Glenn M. Blair, R. Stewart Jones, and Ray H. Simpson, Educational Psychology, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963), p.244.

system, or when there is likely comparability of elements due to undiscriminated similarities, the amount of proactive inhibition becomes great.<sup>1</sup>

The system of the old language competes with the newer set of the foreign language system, and when the new learning is required, it is distorted by the knowledge of the older language. The memory or use of the new language is distorted in a predicted direction because of the knowledge of the previous language. What is more often practiced is more easily and automatically recalled. And when practice in the mother tongue naturally supersedes any practice in the foreign language, and when there is little practice in the new language, there is small chance for it to be well assimilated. Confusion results. When there is confusion due to undiscriminated learning, proactive inhibition results and linguistic interference occurs.

Lado explains the process of second language learning.<sup>2</sup> He writes that all language learning occurs through experience. Each new experience is assumed to have a trace in the memory store of the individual. Ease in using a language unit or pattern is a facility. Habits which permit the rapid use of a language are also facilities. Learning a second language then involves the acquisition of varying degrees of facility for each phonemes, word, pattern or part of speech. Those facilities must be learned so that they can operate when attention is on the content and not on the expression items. "The facilities must be developed to such a degree that they can be elicited or

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<sup>1</sup>David T. Ausbel, and Elias Blake Jr. "Proactive Inhibition in the Forgetting of Meaningful School Materials." Journal of Educational Research, (Vol.LII December 1958), pp. 145-149.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Lado, Language Teaching, A Scientific Approach (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1964), pp. 37-40.



experienced even though the speaker's attention is busy scanning ahead of the items in use or keeping the sense of the argument properly in line with his intended message."<sup>1</sup>

Since all experiences leave a trace in the memory store, it may be assumed that all previous experiences are a factor in the learning of a new language, "in practical terms only repeated experiences will potentially influence new language learning."<sup>2</sup>

Since repeated experiences create facilities which permit the proper and rapid use of the language, in this respect the Iraqi students in normal Government schools should have more practice and experience in English. They receive six periods of English per week. The duration of each period is 45 minutes. In large classes each child barely gets one chance to speak in the class. Their extra-curricular experiences with the English language is limited to occasional visits to the cinema, or listening to hit songs. The four hours and twenty-five minutes English instruction for the whole week is not enough for structural retraining, and by no means sufficient to establish the facilities required to establish the habit of using the new language. Therefore, when pressed to talk or write English, they tend to translate their thoughts from Arabic and use English words to convey their ideas.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.39.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

On the establishment of facilities regarding language similarities and differences, Lado<sup>1</sup> reports the following:

if the expression, content, and association are functionally the same in the native language and the new language, there is maximum facilitation . . . . If the unit or pattern is not the same and will not function as the same in the new language without structural retraining, there will be interference with the new language both:

- (1) because new forms have to be learned as facilities,
- and
- (2) because the field that elicits the new facility is similar to that which elicited the old, thus activating the native language facility and distorting the new one.

The Difference Between First And Second Language Learning:

Every normal human being learns at least one language during infancy. "The ability to use a human language does not depend on being intelligent or having a large brain. It depends on being human."<sup>2</sup>

By the age of four, a child has mastered the basic elements of language structure. Another language learned either simultaneously or later duplicates the process of learning the first language and in many ways the function of the former, and involves the alternative use of both physical and mental organs. The primary linguistic problem comes in keeping the two languages apart. Whenever this

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.40.

<sup>2</sup>Eric H. Lenneberg, "Speech as a Motor Skill With Special Reference to non-phasic disorders", Monographs of The Society For Research in Child Development: The Acquisition of Language, ed. Ursula Bellugi and Roger Brown (New York: Child Development Publications of The Society For Research In Child Development, Inc., 1964), XXIX No.1, p.197.

condition is not met, there is linguistic interference defined as "deviation from the norms of either language."<sup>1</sup>

The former popular belief was that two existing languages were stored separately in the user's mind, i.e., that each language was distinctly stored in a separate area in the brain. In this case there would be no problem of linguistic interference as the two languages would be neatly stored away in different compartments.

Neurological advances have proved that there is no such thing as different language areas, but one language area, and that the neural cells would either function as "separate" or "fused" systems. When the neural cells fuse there is likely to be switching from one code system to another, resulting in rearrangement of either language.<sup>2</sup>

When an individual learns his first language, he is forced to use it continuously as it is the only linguistic system available for communication. Consistent use makes that type of verbal behaviour a habit, and its use becomes automatic. At the beginning of learning a second language, production tends to be conscious. Delay in recall causes the user to switch to the system of the old language out of habit, and as a linguistic crutch the imposition of the foreign element results in interference, hence shaky or wrong language. This mental dependency on the other language system is one of the stumbling stones in the process of efficient language learning.

Learning a second language means learning a system or a code.

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<sup>1</sup>Weinreich, p.1.

<sup>2</sup>Wallace E. Lambert, "Measurement of Linguistic Dominance of Bilinguals", Journal of Abnormal and Soc. Psych. Vol. 50, (1955), pp. 197-200.

"It is possible that one would make mistakes in the system or rules of his own native language. But the problem of misapplying the rules of a second language looms ever greater"<sup>1</sup> for these reasons:

- (1) One has less practice in the foreign language than in the native language.
- (2) No matter how hard one learns and memorizes the foreign language and its patterns, a large amount is left to the application of the rule and thus to potential errors.
- (3) Subsequent to the learning of a foreign language one has learned a set of rules that govern the system of the native language.
- (4) At an earlier period, when the patterns and rules of one's native language are comparatively new, the interference that comes from the rules of the native language is likely to be small.
- (5) The older one becomes, the more the system of the native language is likely to interfere.

#### Age And Acquisition of Second Language:

It has been strongly suggested that the years between two and the early teens constitute a critical period for the acquisition of languages, a period that is presumed critical for biological reasons.

Social scientists observe that the biologically critical

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Politzer, Foreign Language Learning: A Linguistic Introduction, Preliminary Edition (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1965), p.25.

period is also socially critical; there are age-graded role changes of considerable importance between infancy and adolescence. The years of early childhood are years of maximal dependence on others and this dependence may make a child especially susceptible to influence. It is in early childhood also, that the human being is able to devote a large amount of time to the practice of linguistic skills. The child's accomplishments between two and three are genuinely dazzling; but in comparing what the child does in one year with what a student does in his course of English in school, we should remember that the child puts in a full working day. When children are first learning to name things for instance, they go about the house all day saying over and over again the same stock of words. An Iraqi student has only four hours and twenty-five minutes of English every week, during which his individual practice is even much less in the classroom.

Finally it is expected that a child will make speech errors and not be ridiculed for them. Adults learning a foreign language are frequently unhappy about the fact that they must become like little children again. One of the personality factors determining whether or not an adult will pick up the language seems to be the individual's willingness to go ahead and talk, however clumsily or ungrammatically.

Determining Linguistic Interference:

"We get closest to the language problems by a systematic comparison of the native language and the foreign language".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Lado, p.2.

The causes of specific linguistic interference phenomena can, in most cases, be determined by linguistic contrastive analysis. "In the comparison between native and foreign language lies the key to ease or difficulty in foreign language learning."<sup>1</sup>

The phonological, lexical, or grammatical systems of two languages are compared and the differences delineated, thus listing the potential form of interference in a given learning situation.

Lado has suggested ways for comparing two sound systems, two vocabulary systems and two grammatical structures.<sup>2</sup> Weinreich discussed the problems of interference in these same three language areas.<sup>3</sup> Haugen made a valuable inventory of the works done in the field of language interference.<sup>4</sup> But the studies he mentioned are descriptive of the extent of convergence between the immigrants and the newly learned language.<sup>5</sup> Politzer<sup>6</sup> and Moulton<sup>7</sup> have done series of contrastive texts for French and German. Bulos<sup>8</sup> has also done a contrastive study on the English and Arabic relative pronoun.

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<sup>1</sup>Lado, p.1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 14-16.

<sup>3</sup>Weinreich, p.31.

<sup>4</sup>Einar Haugen, Bilingualism in the Americas: A Bibliography and Research Guide. (American Dialect Society, 1956).

<sup>5</sup>Convergence, according to Haugen is the systematic change in the language due to the merging or interference of two separate systems. Ibid., p.15.

<sup>6</sup>Robert L. Politzer, Teaching French: An Introduction to Applied Linguistics (New York: Ginn and Company, 1960).

<sup>7</sup>William G. Moulton, The Sounds of English and German (Contrastive Structure Series." Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962).

<sup>8</sup>Afif A. Bulos, "Ismull-Mawsul in Classical Arabic and the Relative Pronoun in English: A Contrastive Study", Language Learning X (1960) i-ii, 47-53.

Raja Nasr has made a contrastive analysis of English and Classical Arabic, pointing out the learning problems of the Arab student studying English.

In comparing two grammatical systems, the linguist's main concern is to describe the interference resulting from a situation of language contact;<sup>1</sup> this will presumably involve the detection of non-native elements in one of the languages, i.e., "these instances of deviation from the norms of either language . . . as a result of familiarity with more than one language."<sup>2</sup> Those non-native elements are called 'replicas', the model of which exists in the other language. For example, when an Arab student says 'this watch pocket' meaning to convey the message 'this is a pocket watch', he is replicating the Arabic modification structure which is quite different from the English modification structure. In Arabic the modifiers usually follow the modified word: therefore hearing the following sentence is not unusual, i.e., 'I have book red' for 'I have a red book'.

So, linguistic interference has occurred when a single sound, word, or structure is plucked out of one language and is used in the context of another.

In the phonological area, the interference results in foreign accent. It is not uncustomary for Iraqi students to say /əksəkyuwz mi/ for excuse me, because the /sk/ consonant cluster does not exist in Iraqi Arabic.

↓  
Should  
should be /ksk/.

/sk/ occurs in ?  
/skoot/

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<sup>1</sup>Language contact: "when two languages are being used alternately by the same individual, they are said to be in contact". Weinreich, p.1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

In the lexical area, one word in the native language is given an equivalent to a word in the foreign language. The harm resulting from this kind of translation stems from the fact that the area of meaning that a word covers in one language is in most cases very different from the area covered in another language. An Iraqi student, being beaten by another student, would complain in English saying, "Sir, he substracted me on the ground and mutliplied me" meaning to say, "Sir, he threw me to the ground and beat me, translating from /Tarahani glal arD wa Darabani/. Or a girl feeling sick would say "Miss, myself is playing", translating from the Colloquial Arabic /nefsi datil 9b/.

Comparing English With Arabic  
Grammatical Structure:

A most comprehensive analysis of the difference between the Arabic and English language has been done by Raja Nasr. He compared both languages on the phonological and grammatical levels and pointed out the differences and the specific learning problems for Arab students. His contrastive analysis of the English and Classical Arabic statement, question and negative patterns has been particularly valuable for this study, since the test of Classical Arabic interference has been based on his book.

The comparison between Arabic grammatical structures and English grammatical structures is valuable because therein lies the key to a great many of the grammatical mistakes that the Arab



students make in their English. Just as the phonological interference would account for their foreign accent, transfer of the Arabic grammar to the English language accounts for the un-Englishness of the students' writing.

By comparing the wrong English pattern as produced by an Arab student with the parallel Arabic pattern for the same expression, one often discovers a literal translation from Arabic.

Quite often we hear an Arab student say 'I am afraid from the dog' instead of 'I am afraid of the dog', or 'he not drink' with the literal translation from Colloquial Arabic /huwa ma yišrab/. A great deal of the ungrammatically constructed English responses by Arab students are not chance or random mistakes - they follow a definite and correct grammatical order; but that of another language. They are wrong because they use the grammar system of one language with the morphemes of another language; and the borrowed grammar often violates the grammatical order and relationships of the other language in which it is being used. Therefore "the student must know for instance, and be able to use, the word patterns that English uses to express fundamental relationships. Very early he must develop a habit of placing single word modifiers or substantives before the words they modify."<sup>1</sup> Without making the structural devices matters of automatic habit, the student will tend to utilize the grammar of his native language as an aid to express himself, hence interference occurs.

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<sup>1</sup>Fries, p.33.

Implications For Teaching:

Contrastive analysis discovers the difference between two languages involved, and delineates the specific linguistic problems which demand special and different emphasis in the teaching of the foreign language. It is "in the comparison between native and foreign language lies the key to ease or difficulty in foreign language learning."<sup>1</sup>

Such comparison is the best way to describe the co-existent relations of the native language and the target language. It identifies the model and its replica and relates them to their respective linguistic systems. The results of linguistic contrastive analysis are of great value to the teacher:

- (1) In order to understand the particular problems the students will have in learning the target language;
- (2) In order to help the teacher know the chief differences and similarities of the two systems and to arrange the results in a satisfactory system for teaching, to be implemented with adequate specific practice materials through which the learner may master the structure of the foreign language;
- (3) In order to form a corpus for compiling English textbooks with focused attention on all the difficult structures that have to be mastered in a limited course of study.

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<sup>1</sup>Lado, p.1.

"The most efficient materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the language of the learner."<sup>1</sup>

Conclusion:

If the Iraqi student makes a mistake in an English grammatical structure:

(1) Is it caused by Arabic interference?

(2) Is it caused by mislearning or forgotten learning?

If the mistake is caused by the Arabic language interference, is it the interference of Classical or of Colloquial Arabic?

1. It would be highly presumptuous to state that all the mistakes the student makes are due to native language interference. Quite often the mistakes are due to confusion in application of the learned foreign structure; the mistakes may be the result of the overanxiety of the student in applying the new grammatical devices where sometimes they do not fit. For example, he might say 'the farmer has five oxes', or 'I eated'. This shows that he has learned that the change from singular to plural form in English follows a phonological pattern, for the most part, and has learned the plural inflection; also he has learned the preterit inflection form. In this case, it is the interference from the English language which is causing the mistake.

But if the student makes a mistake in an English grammatical pattern, and if the mistake is structurally different from the pattern

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<sup>1</sup>Fries, p.9.

in the native language, and if the non-belonging elements in the English pattern are directly borrowed from the parallel Arabic grammatical pattern, then we can assume that the mistake has occurred due to the imposition of the native language grammar; hence due to the interference of the native language. If the distorted English response, when translated literally into Arabic forms a correct Arabic response, then the mistake is definitely caused by the transfer of the native language grammar into English which has a different grammatical arrangement for that pattern.

Conversely, if the Arab student makes a correct response in an English pattern which is different in form and distribution from the corresponding grammatical pattern in Arabic, then that student has mastered the pattern; otherwise it is highly improbable that it would have occurred by chance or by substitution of the Arabic grammar.

2. Forgotten learning equals no learning. In this case the student resorts to his native language grammar as an aid for communication in the foreign language. If the Arab student forgets the modification structure of English and he wants to say /ha a kitabu Ali/, in English, his response would be 'this book Ali'. Or he would say 'eats the boy?' for 'does the boy eat?' forgetting the use of the auxiliary do, and the different word order in English, and so he translates from Arabic.

Mislearning leads to the wrong application of the new grammar. The Arab student learns that the plural of box is boxes, and so he does not see why the plural of ox becomes oxen, because he has learnt /s/, /z/ or /əz/ makes plurals. Or he might say "He is

a nice person, you is a nice person too."

3. If the native language interferes in the learning of the foreign language, as has been proved by researches in psychology and contrastive linguistic analyses, then for the Iraqi student, which language interferes, the written or the spoken; the Classical Arabic or the Colloquial, or both?

In discussing native Arabic language interference we must define the "native language" of the Arab students. Arab students read and write Classical Arabic, but they speak Colloquial Arabic. From observation there are differences between Classical and Colloquial Arabic on the phonological, lexical and grammatical levels. The grammar of the Colloquial Arabic has diverged from the Classical Arabic, although for the most part it can be the same. The grammar of the Colloquial Arabic is not entirely estranged from the Classical grammar, that is, it is impossible to say that it is an entirely different system. What can be said is that the grammatical patterns in Colloquial Arabic might be considered loose, or even wrong by the set standards of the written Arabic. The Classical Arabic grammar follows a definite set of rigid and fixed rules. The Colloquial Arabic grammar is not rigid, there is no fixed rule to it. One can say for a statement /kaana Ali Taalib/ or /Ali kaan Taalib/ or /Taalib kaan Ali/ meaning 'Ali was a student' without being ungrammatical.

Colloquial Arabic is the language which is more used in every day communication than Classical Arabic. Iraqi students in the sixth grade of the elementary schools (ages between twelve and

fourteen) cannot be said to have mastered the Classical Arabic; the more frequently used language is the Colloquial, they hear it, speak it and think in it. It would be misleading to say that at the school level and age mentioned, only the Classical Arabic interferes, and that the mistakes they make in English due to native language interference, are caused by the translation from the Classical Arabic. At that school level and age, the Iraqi students may still make mistakes in their written Arabic, that is to say, the Colloquial Arabic may interfere with the learning of the Classical Arabic.

## CHAPTER II

### THE RESEARCH

Through the method of contrastive analysis, linguistic science predicts the types of structural mistakes that would be made by Arabs learning English due to the structural differences between Arabic and English.

To measure the extent of the influence of Arabic structure on the learning of English structures, a multiple-choice test was arranged and administered to Iraqi students in the sixth grade, normal Government schools of Baghdad. The test is based on the contrastive analysis made by Nasr in his book The Teaching of English To Arab Students. In addition to Nasr's contrastive analysis between English and Classical Arabic, a contrastive analysis between English and Colloquial Arabic of the same items was made by the writer.

#### Construction of The Test:

The test was focused on seventeen linguistic problems from the following grammatical patterns:

- (1) Statement patterns
- (2) Negative patterns
- (3) Question patterns

The test included fifty-one multiple choice questions. The seventeen linguistic problems were stated by Nasr as being due to the difference between Arabic and English. Three replications or

sentences were made for each problematic linguistic formula to reduce chance occurrence and to test the consistency of the students' response. Each test item included:

- (1) One correct English response;
- (2) one predicted response due to literal translation from Classical Arabic;
- (3) one predicted response due to literal translation from Colloquial Iraqi Arabic.

The Linguistic Problems are:

In the Statement Patterns:

<u>F o r m u l a</u>	<u>Problem</u>
1. Noun (or substitute word) + <u>be</u> (present) + noun. Example: Ali is a student.	1. use of <u>be</u> and <u>a</u> .
2. Noun (or substitute word) + <u>be</u> (preterit) + noun. Example: The man was an engineer.	2. use of <u>a</u> and <u>word order</u> .
3. Noun (or substitute word) + <u>be</u> (preterit) + adjective. Example: The book was good.	3. <u>word order</u> .
4. Noun (or substitute word) + <u>be</u> (present) + adjective. Example: The man is old.	4. use of <u>be</u> .
5. Noun (or substitute word) + <u>have</u> (present or past) + verb. Example: The man has eaten.	5. <u>form</u> and <u>word order</u> .

In the Negative Patterns:

6. Noun + <u>be</u> (present) + <u>not</u> + noun. Example: The man is not a doctor.	6. use of <u>be</u> and <u>a</u> ; <u>word order</u> .
7. Substitute word + <u>be</u> (present) + <u>not</u> + noun. Example: He is not a man.	7. use of <u>be</u> and <u>a</u> ; <u>order of be, not and a</u> .
8. Noun (or substitute word) + <u>be</u> (preterit) + noun. Example: The man was not a doctor.	8. use of <u>a</u> ; <u>word order</u> .
9. Noun (or substitute word) + <u>be</u> (present) + <u>not</u> + adjective. Example: He is not tall.	9. use of <u>be</u> ; <u>word order</u> .



F o r m u l a

Problem

11. Noun (or substitute word) + do (present or preterit) + not + verb. Example  
The man does not walk.

11. use of do, word order.

12. Noun (or substitute word)

12. word order; elimination of to.

(can )  
(must )  
(will )  
+ (would ) + not + verb. Example:  
(shall ) The boy cannot walk.  
(should )  
(may )  
(might )

In the Question Patterns:

13. Be (present) + noun. Example: Is the boy in school?

13. use of be.

14. (how )  
(when ) + do + noun + verb.  
(where ) Example: When does the boy study?

14. word order; use of do.

15. (when )  
(where ) + be (present) + noun.  
(what ) Example: Where is the boy?  
(how )  
(why )  
(who )

15. word order; use of be.

16. (will )  
(would )  
(can ) + noun + verb.  
(could ) Example: Can the boy go?  
(shall )  
(should )  
(may )  
(might )  
(must )

16. different word order for statement and question.

17. (when ) (will )  
(where ) (would )  
(how ) (can )  
(why ) + (could ) + noun + verb.  
(who ) (shall ) Example: What can  
(which ) (should ) the boy do?  
(what ) (may )  
(might )  
(must )

17. word order.

The Test

1. A. The man doctor.  
B. The man is a doctor.  
C. Doctor the man.
2. A. Engineer was the man.  
B. The man was an engineer.  
C. Was the man engineer.
3. A. The book was good.  
B. Was the book good.  
C. Good was the book.
4. A. Good the book.  
B. The book good.  
C. The book is good.
5. A. The man has eaten.  
B. Eaten the man.  
C. Ate the man.
6. A. Not the man doctor.  
B. The man is not a doctor.  
C. The man not doctor.
7. A. He not man.  
B. Not man.  
C. He is not a man.
8. A. The man was not a doctor.  
B. Not was the man doctor.  
C. The man net was doctor.
9. A. Not the book good.  
B. The book not good.  
C. The beck is not good.
10. A. This not good.  
B. This is not good.  
C. Not this good.
11. A. The man not walk.  
B. The man does not walk.  
C. Not walk the man.
12. A. Not can the man to walk.  
B. The man not can to walk.  
C. The man cannot walk.
13. A. Is the boy in school?  
B. The boy in school?  
C. In the school the boy?
14. A. The boy how eats?  
B. How does the boy eat?  
C. How eats the boy?
15. A. When will come the boy?  
B. The boy when will come?  
C. When is the boy coming?
16. A. Can go the boy?  
B. Can the boy go?  
C. Can the boy to go?
17. A. When can the boy come?  
B. The boy when can to come?  
C. When can to come the boy?
18. A. He is a man.  
B. Man he.  
C. He man.
19. A. Student was Ali.  
B. Ali was a student.  
C. Was Ali student.
20. A. She was pretty.  
B. Pretty was she.  
C. Was pretty.
21. A. The man old.  
B. The man is old.  
C. Old the man.
22. A. Written he.  
B. He has written.  
C. Was wrote.
23. A. Not the boy policeman.  
B. The boy not policeman.  
C. The boy is not a policeman.
24. A. They not students.  
B. They are not students.  
C. Not students.

25. A. Not was this book.  
B. This was not a book.  
C. This not was book.
26. A. He is not tall.  
B. Not he tall.  
C. He not tall.
27. A. The book not was good.  
B. Not was the book good.  
C. The book was not good.
28. A. Not drink he.  
B. He does not drink.  
C. He not drink.
29. A. The boy must not study.  
B. The boy not must to study.  
C. Must to not study the boy.
30. A. The girls at home?  
B. At home the girls?  
C. Are the girls at home?
31. A. The boy when studies?  
B. When does the boy study?  
C. When studies the boy?
32. A. Where the boy?  
B. Where is the boy?  
C. The boy where he?
33. A. Must to go the boy?  
B. Must the boy go?  
C. Must the boy to go?
34. A. How will the boy study?  
B. How will study the boy?  
C. The boy how will study?
35. A. Layla teacher.  
B. Layla is a teacher.  
C. Teacher Layla.
36. A. Book was this.  
B. This was a book.  
C. Was this book.
37. A. The man was strong.  
B. Was the man strong.  
C. Was strong the man.
38. A. Good this  
B. This good.  
C. This is good.
39. A. The baby has run.  
B. Run the baby.  
C. Ran the baby.
40. A. Ali not woman.  
B. Not Ali woman.  
C. Ali is not a woman.
41. A. Not teacher.  
B. She is not a teacher.  
C. She not teacher.
42. A. Zeki was not a man.  
B. Not was Zeki man.  
C. Zeki not was man.
43. A. Not the girl pretty.  
B. The girl is not pretty.  
C. The girl not pretty.
44. A. He was not fat.  
B. Not was he fat.  
C. He not was fat.
45. A. Not ran the girl.  
B. The girl did not run.  
C. The girl not ran.
46. A. He not can sing.  
B. Not can he to sing.  
C. He cannot sing.
47. A. Is the pen on the table?  
B. On the table the pen?  
C. The pen on the table?
48. A. The boy where plays he?  
B. Where plays the boy?  
C. Where does the boy play?
49. A. What his name?  
B. His name what?  
C. What is his name?
50. A. Can the boy sing?  
B. Can the boy to sing?  
C. Can sing the boy?
51. A. What can the boy to do?  
B. The boy what can to do?  
C. What can the boy do?

The Administration Of The Test:

The Experimental Group:

The test was administered in Baghdad to 200 Iraqi students of the sixth grade Government elementary schools. The test was given in sixteen elementary schools distributed over the area of Baghdad. For the purpose of controlling the variables and making the samples of the study representative of the student population of normal Government elementary schools, model elementary school and private school children who have had more years of English instruction were not included.

- (1) All the students, boys and girls, have completed two years of English.
- (2) They have been introduced to all the patterns given in the test through their uniform text-books - The Oxford English Course For The Republic of Iraq.<sup>1</sup> Book I and Book II.
- (3) They all had the same number of periods of English, that is six periods per week. The duration of each period is 45 minutes.
- (4) Their ages were between 12 and 14.
- (5) The method of instruction and order of progression of the learning material is also uniform by the instructions of the Ministry of Education and Inspector and Supervision.
- (6) All the students had no English speaking background and no English speaking parents.
- (7) The children were chosen irrespective of their school grades in English or other subjects.

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<sup>1</sup>A.S. Hornby and S. Hakim, (London: Oxford University Press, 1957).

The test was administered by the same teacher to all the schools. Instructions were given in Arabic to ensure that they understood what was required of them. Two preliminary multiple choice questions on the cover page were done in the class first. It was explained to the students that each question included three sentences, A, B, and C, and that all three sentences communicated exactly the same idea. Only one of the three sentences is the correct answer in English; the other two are wrong English. Students were asked to blacken out the letter corresponding to the answer which they thought would be the correct English response.

Only when it was sure that all the students understood what was required and how to answer the test, were the students asked to open their answer sheets and start the examination.

The students were required to answer all the questions. A check was made of each answer sheet after to make sure that no question was left unanswered.

Examination time was unlimited.

The Expected Results of the Test:

1. To reveal the extent of native language interference after two years of learning English.
2. To show if the students' mistakes are due to translation from the Classical Arabic only. This would indicate the reliability of Nasr's Contrastive analysis which is based on English and Classical Arabic.

3. To reveal to what extent the students translate from Classical Arabic; and if the Classical Arabic interference is significant or not.
4. To find out if the Colloquial Arabic interferes.
5. To reveal the extent of the Colloquial Arabic interference, and if it is significant.
6. To determine if there is any significant difference between the interference of Classical and Colloquial Arabic.
7. To determine which interference is more significant; the Classical or the Colloquial Arabic.
8. To determine if the students are consistent in their responses.
9. To determine which linguistic problem is more difficult for the students.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE RESULTS OF THE TEST

We want to test the hypothesis that "there is no native language interference", by using a level of significance of 0.05.

TABLE 1

THE OBSERVED RESULTS FROM THE TEST WITH THE TOTAL  
OF CORRECT RESPONSES, WRONG RESPONSES DUE TO  
CLASSICAL ARABIC INTERFERENCE AND WRONG  
RESPONSES DUE TO COLLOQUIAL ARABIC  
INTERFERENCE

	Replication A	Replication B	Replication C	Total
Correct English	2641	2651	2662	7954
Wrong English Due to Translation From Classical Arabic	385	311	432	1128
Wrong English Due to Translation From Colloquial Arabic	374	438	306	1118
<b>T o t a l</b>	<b>3400</b>	<b>3400</b>	<b>3400</b>	<b>10200</b>

TABLE 2

THE CALCULATED VALUE OF TABLE 1

	A. B. C.
Correct English	2651.33
Translation from Classical Arabic	376.0
Translation from Colloquial Arabic	372.66

The calculated  $X^2 = 40.04$  from TABLE 1.<sup>1</sup> The critical value  $X^2$  at 0.95 for 4 degrees of freedom is 9.49. Then since 40.04 is greater than 9.49, we reject the hypothesis that there is no native language interference, and conclude that the dependence on native language is significant or that there is native language interference.

The Extent of Native Language Interference:

Out of 10,200 total responses, there were 2,246 wrong answers due to native language interference (TABLE 1). The proportion of the wrong answers to the total number of responses is  $\frac{2246}{10200} = 0.2201$ ; then the percentage of native language interference is 22.01%.

Are the Students' Mistakes Due to Translation From Classical Arabic Only?

From the tabulated results of the test (see TABLE 1) we find that the students translate also from the Colloquial Arabic. Out of 10,200 samples, there were 1,128 wrong answers due to translation from the Classical, and 1,118 wrong answers due to translation from the Colloquial Arabic.

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<sup>1</sup>The formula for Chi square is:  $X^2 = \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$



2. We want to test the hypothesis that "the interference of Classical Arabic is not significant" by using a level of significance of 0.05.

TABLE 3

THE OBSERVED AND EXPECTED VALUES OF CLASSICAL ARABIC INTERFERENCE

	Observed Value			Total
	A	B	C	
Classical Arabic Interference	385	311	432	1128
-- Expected Value --				
Classical Arabic Interference	381.18	376.16	367.35	

The calculated  $X^2 = 19.79$  (TABLE 3). The critical value of  $X^2$  at 0.95 for 2 degrees of freedom is 5.99. Then, since 19.79 is greater than 5.99, we reject the hypothesis that the interference of Classical Arabic is not significant. The dependence on Classical Arabic is highly significant.

The Extent of Translation From the Classical Arabic:

In a sample of 10,200 answers there were 1,128 wrong answers due to literal translation from Classical Arabic (TABLE 3). So, the proportion of translation from Classical Arabic is 11.1%. The 95% confidence limits for this proportion falls within a confidence interval of 10.49 - 11.70.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The formula for the confidence interval at 95% is:

$$P \pm 1.96 \sqrt{\frac{Pq}{n}}$$

3. We want to test the hypothesis that "Colloquial Arabic interference is not significant", by using a level of significance of 0.05.

TABLE 4

THE OBSERVED AND EXPECTED VALUE OF COLLOQUIAL ARABIC INTERFERENCE

	Observed Value			Total
	A	B	C	
Colloquial Arabic Interference	374	438	306	1118
	Expected Value			
Colloquial Arabic Interference	377.81	372.83	367.35	

The calculated  $X^2 = 22.96$  (TABLE 4). The critical value  $X^2$  at .95 for 2 degrees of freedom is 5.95. Since 22.96 is greater than 5.95, we reject the hypothesis that the interference of Colloquial Arabic is not significant. We conclude that the dependence on Colloquial Arabic or the interference of Colloquial Arabic is highly significant.

The Extent of Translation From the Colloquial Arabic

In a sample of 10,200 answers, there were 1,118 (TABLE 4) wrong answers due to literal translation from the Colloquial Arabic.

The proportion of the wrong answers due to Colloquial Arabic interference to the total number of answers is 10.96%. The 95% confidence interval for this percentage is 10.35 - 11.56.

4. Which interferes more, the Classical Arabic or the Colloquial Arabic?

From the percentages we found in the previous problems, the percentage of Classical Arabic interference is 11.1%, and the percentage of Colloquial Arabic interference is 10.96%. Therefore, the dependence on Classical Arabic is greater than the dependence on Colloquial Arabic, or more mistakes are due to Classical Arabic than Colloquial Arabic. The translation from the Colloquial Arabic is less, and Classical Arabic interferes more than the Colloquial Arabic. But the difference between 11.1% and 10.96% is so small that we cannot say that there is significant difference.

Testing the Students Consistency in their Responses:

When a student has learned a linguistic pattern well and he makes a correct response in the first replication, would he be consistent in making correct responses if he meets the same pattern in other replications? That is, would he have the same score for the same pattern in the three replications given in the test? Or conversly, if he makes a mistake, would he commit the same mistake in other replications, and have the same score?

1. To test the hypothesis that "the students are not consistent in choosing the correct response in Replication A, B and C for the 17 linguistic patterns", a null hypothesis was posted, i.e. 'that the students are consistent in their choice of correct English responses'

TABLE 5

Correct English Responses  
In the 17 Test Problems

	A	B	C	Total of A, B, C out of 600
1	182	184	186	552
2	119	91	153	363
3	151	175	149	475
4	170	172	181	523
5	157	183	167	507
6	174	162	167	503
7	189	184	186	559
8	172	153	173	498
9	182	181	174	537
10	181	152	174	507
11	156	164	176	496
12	139	132	127	398
13	123	131	132	386
14	151	162	166	479
15	124	186	136	446
16	121	118	124	363
17	150	121	91	362
				<u>7954</u>

TABLE 6

Test of TABLE 5

Variation due to	Degree of Freedom	Sum of Squares	Mean sum of Squares
Within Sample	16	69.04	4.3150
Residuals	34	11468208.66	337300.0
T o t a l	50	11468277.7	

With 5% level of significance, the calculated F 17.34 is .000012 (TABLE 6).<sup>1</sup> The tabulated F 17.34 at 5% level = 2.01. Since the calculated F is less than the tabulated F, therefore the calculated F is not significant. We accept the null hypothesis that the students are consistent in their correct English responses. Since the calculated F is very small with respect to the tabulated F, we can say that it is very insignificant. We conclude that the students are highly consistent when they are making correct English responses.

2. To test the hypothesis 'that the students, with respect to the three replications of each linguistic problem are not consistent in their responses which show mistakes due to Classical Arabic interference,' a null hypothesis was posted, i.e., 'the students are consistent in their responses.'

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<sup>1</sup>The formula for the calculated F =  $\frac{\text{M.S. of Within}}{\text{M.S. of Residuals}}$

TABLE 7

Total Wrong English Responses Due  
To Classical Arabic Interference

	A	B	C	Total of A, B, C Out of 600
1	13	10	9	32
2	41	38	43	122
3	32	9	26	67
4	18	12	15	45
5	29	6	13	48
6	11	13	10	34
7	4	4	3	11
8	8	14	9	31
9	6	8	10	24
10	7	14	9	30
11	9	10	6	25
12	10	10	11	31
13	65	60	58	183
14	10	12	23	45
15	51	7	58	116
16	47	47	36	130
17	24	37	93	154

TABLE 8

F Test Calculation From Table 7

Variations due to	Degree of Freedom	Sum of Squares	Mean Sum of Squares
Within sample	16	14422.96	901.4362
Residuals	34	5093.34	149.8041
Total	50	19516.32	

With 5% level of significance, the result of the calculated F 16.34 is 6.01 (TABLE 8). The result of the tabulated F 16.34 is 2.01 at 5% level of significance. Since the calculated F 16.34 at 5% level of significance is greater than the tabulated F, we reject the null hypothesis that the students are consistent in making mistakes caused by the Classical Arabic interference. The calculated F is very significant because it is much greater than the tabulated F. We conclude then that the students are highly inconsistent when they are making mistakes due to Classical Arabic interference.

3. To test the hypothesis that 'the students are not consistent in their response in the three replications to each linguistic problem which show mistakes due to Colloquial Arabic interference, we set up a null hypothesis that 'the students are consistent'.

TABLE 9

Total Wrong English Responses Due to  
Colloquial Arabic Interference

	A	B	C	Total of A, B, C out of 600
1	5	6	5	16
2	40	71	4	115
3	17	16	25	58
4	12	16	4	32
5	14	11	20	45
6	15	25	23	63
7	7	12	11	30
8	20	33	18	71
9	12	11	16	39
10	12	34	17	63
11	35	26	18	79
12	51	58	62	171
13	12	9	10	31
14	39	26	11	76
15	25	7	6	38
16	32	35	40	107
17	26	42	16	84



TABLE 10

F Test Calculation for TABLE 9

Variations due to	Degree of Freedom	Sum of Squares	Mean Sum of Squares
Within Sample	16	7488.86	468.05375
Residual	34	4106.66	120.78411
T o t a l	50	11595.52	

At 5% level of significance, the calculated F 16.34 is 3.87. The tabulated F 16.34 is 2.01. Since 3.87 is greater than 2.01 at 5% level of significance, we reject the null hypothesis that the students are consistent in their mistakes due to Colloquial Arabic interference. We conclude that the students are inconsistent in their responses in the three replications with respect to their wrong answers due to literal translation from the Colloquial Arabic.

Since the difference between the calculated F and the tabulated F is not very great, we can say the students are inconsistent, but not highly inconsistent.

Which linguistic problems show greater native language interference?

TABLE 11

Test Results of the Seventeen  
Linguistic Problems

	W r o n g E n g l i s h			Total Wrong English Responses
	Correct English	Classical Arabic Interference	Colloquial Arabic Interference	
1	552	32	16	48
2	363	122	115	237
3	475	67	58	125
4	523	45	32	77
5	507	48	45	93
6	503	34	63	97
7	559	11	30	41
8	498	31	71	102
9	537	24	39	63
10	507	30	63	93
11	496	25	79	104
12	398	31	171	202
13	386	183	31	214
14	479	45	76	121
15	446	116	38	154
16	363	130	107	237
17	362	154	84	238
Totals	7954	1128	1118	2246

From the tabulation of the test results for the 17 linguistic problems (TABLE 11) we found that Pattern No.17 has the greatest concentration of interference. Out of 600 sample size from this problem there were 238 or 39.6% wrong answers due to native language interference combining both the Classical and the Colloquial Arabic.

Linguistic Pattern No.16 showed almost as heavy a cluster of mistakes as problem No.17. Out of a sample of size 600 answers there were 237 wrong answers due to native language interference or 39.5%. Both problems 16 and 17 fall within the question pattern.

Linguistic statement Pattern No.2 showed also significant learning problems. Out of 600 sample size, there were 237 wrong responses or proportion of 39.5% due to different word order and use of a in English.

Linguistic Problem No.13 in question pattern showed 214 wrong answers out of the total 600 sample responses for that pattern or 35.6%

In the negative pattern, linguistic problem No.12 showed 202 wrong answers out of 600 sample responses or 33.6%.

The least problematic linguistic pattern was problem No.7 in the negative pattern which scored the smallest number of mistakes; that is, 41 out of 600 answers or 6.81%. And next is the linguistic problem No.1, a statement pattern, which scored only 48 mistakes out of 600 sample answers or 8%.

The question patterns showed to be the area where there is the greatest concentration of native language interference, followed by the statement pattern which showed less interference than the question

pattern but more than the negative pattern. The minimum interference appeared to be in the negative pattern.

The proportion of the interference to the total sample size of each pattern is:

$$\text{Question Pattern: } \frac{964}{3000} = 32.1\%$$

$$\text{Statement Pattern: } \frac{580}{3000} = 19.3\%$$

$$\text{Negative Pattern: } \frac{702}{4200} = 16.7\%$$

## CHAPTER IV

### INTERPRETATIONS, RESIDUE, CONCLUSIONS AND RELEVANCE FOR TEACHING

#### Interpretation of The Test Results:

The test results revealed that the dependence of the test answers on the native language is significant. This means that the native language interferes significantly; and since the dependence on native language in writing or speaking a foreign language causes grammatical mistakes, then the hypothesis that native language interference causes grammatical mistakes in written English is accepted. This proves that the linguists' claim of native language interference is valid. Out of 10,200 responses there were 2,246 wrong answers due to native language interference. The proportion of the number of wrong answers to the total number of sample answers is 22.1%, which is significant. This shows that after two years of learning English, the native language still interferes and that the extent of interference is significant.

It should be noted that the proportion of the mistakes to the total number of answers probably depends on the number of years of learning English, the text books used, and pedagogical endeavour. If we administered the same test to the third year intermediate grade in Baghdad Government schools, the results would probably be different, since more learning has taken place and interference decreased.

Out of a sample size of 10,200 answers there were 2,246 wrong answers. Out of 2,246 wrong answers there were 1,118 wrong answers due to translation from the Colloquial Arabic and 1,128 wrong answers due

to translation from Classical Arabic. The interference from the Classical Arabic and Colloquial Arabic proved to be highly significant. This proves that the dependence on Colloquial Arabic is almost equal to that of Classical Arabic. Therefore, transfer from Colloquial Arabic cannot be ignored. When a student makes a mistake in written English due to translation from his native language, the expected mistake cannot be said to be due to Classical Arabic interference only, because the test showed that Colloquial Arabic interferes significantly. The proportion of mistakes from the Classical Arabic is 11.1% and the proportion of mistakes due to translation from the Colloquial Arabic is 10.96%. Therefore, the difference is very slight which shows that there is no significant difference between the dependence on Classical Arabic and Colloquial Arabic.

The linguistic problems which revealed strong native language interference, or proved to be more difficult for the students, are arranged according to the graded amount of interference:

1. Question pattern (no.17)	39.6%
2. Question pattern (no.16)	39.5%
3. Statement pattern (no.2)	39.5%
4. Question pattern (no.13)	35.6%
5. Negative pattern (no.12)	33.6%

The linguistic problem which showed the greatest concentration of native language interference is problem No.17, or the question pattern:

(when )  
(where ) + (will )  
(etc. ) (can ) + noun + verb.  
(etc. ) (etc. )

The linguistic problem is word order. Out of 600 sample answers, there were 238 wrong answers or a proportion of 39.6%. Out of the 238 wrong answers there were 154 due to literal translation from the Classical Arabic and 84 due to literal translation from the Colloquial Arabic.

The strong interference of Classical Arabic is particularly evident in the last replication of the 17th linguistic formula which is:

What + can + noun + verb.

Example: (wrong answer due to Classical Arabic)

What can the boy do?

/maḏa yasTaTiigu lwaladu ʔan yaḡmala?/

What can the boy to do.

Or: (wrong answer due to Colloquial Arabic)

What can the boy do?

/lwalad šyigdar ysawi/

The boy what can to do.

This last replication showed marked influence of the Classical Arabic, or that the interference of the Classical Arabic as the cause of the grammatical mistake in that pattern is significantly high. For this replication the mistakes due to Classical Arabic interference and Colloquial Arabic interference scored respectively 93 to 16.

Formula No.17 and in particular the third replication of this formula proved to be the most difficult; there must have been little practice in this pattern and therefore in teaching it must have greater emphasis and more pattern practice.

Second in difficulty were linguistic formula No.16 (which is again in question pattern) and No.2 in statement pattern. Each scored 237 wrong answers out of total 600 for each linguistic problem, or the proportion of 39.5% which is also high.

Problem No.16 involved different word order in English for statement and question. In Arabic it is the same word order for statement and question but preceded for the question by the question word /hal/.

Formula:

(will )  
(can )  
(shall ) + noun + verb  
(may )  
(etc. )

Example: Can the boy go?

/hal yagdiru lwaladu 'an yaḥhaba/

Can the boy to go?

Or: Can the boy go?

/yagdar yruḥ lwalad/

Can go the boy?

(wrong, due to translation from Colloquial Arabic).

Classical Arabic interference in this linguistic pattern is stronger than the Colloquial Arabic interference; each scored respectively 130 to 107.

Statement pattern No.2, involved different word order in English and the use of a or an.



Formula: Noun (or substitute word)+ be (preterit) + noun.

Example: test item No.2:

1. The man was an engineer

/kaana krajilu muhandisan/

Was the man engineer.

(Classical Arabic translation)

2. The man was an engineer.

/muhandis kaan irijaal/

Engineer was the man.

(Colloquial Arabic translation).

Example: test item No.19:

1. Ali was a student.

/kaana Ali tilmi'an/

Was Ali student.

(Classical Arabic)

2. Ali was a student.

/Tilmi` kaan Ali/

Student was Ali.

(Colloquial Arabic)

This statement pattern showed a surprisingly high number of mistakes compared to the other statement pattern, for the number of mistakes was 237 out of 600, or 39.5%. The intensity of native language interference in this pattern reveals that the students have had little practice in this pattern, or that it must have been negligently taught.

For each of the examples just given, the score of Classical Arabic interference and Colloquial Arabic interference (from Tables 7 and 9) is:

Example: Test item No.2

41 translation from Classical Arabic  
40 translation from Colloquial Arabic

Example: Test item No.19

38 translation from Classical Arabic  
71 translation from Colloquial Arabic

We conclude that these students could not have chosen the answer which shows literal translation from the Colloquial Arabic, mistakingly thinking that it is a question pattern, for two reasons:

1. They were made aware by the administrator of the test that the full stop at the end of the sentence meant statement and question mark meant a question pattern.
2. The number of translated answers from Colloquial Arabic is almost equivalent to the number of translation from Classical Arabic. In the second example the number of translated answers from Colloquial Arabic exceeds that of the Classical Arabic; and the Colloquial equivalent clearly looks like a statement.

In the question pattern or linguistic problem (No.13)

Formula: Be (present) + noun

The problem is the use of (be) in the present.

There were 214 wrong answers out of total 600 due to native language interference or the proportion of 35.6%. Classical Arabic

interference is greater than the Colloquial Arabic since there were 183 wrong answers due to literal translation from Classical Arabic and only 31 due to literal translation from Colloquial Arabic.

Out of 600 sample responses from the negative pattern (linguistic problem No.12) there were 202 wrong answers due to native language interference. Here, from the result of the calculation, the interference of Colloquial Arabic is sharply marked, because out of 202 wrong answers there were 171 due to literal translation from the Colloquial Arabic and 31 due to literal translation from Classical Arabic.

The linguistic pattern which showed least interference, or more learning, is the negative pattern (or linguistic problem No.7) of the formula.

Substitute word + be (present) + not + noun.

Example: He is not a man.

The expected learning problems are: the use of be and a; word order, not and a. There were only 41 wrong answers out of 600 for this pattern or 6.8%. Since this pattern is one of the earliest patterns introduced to the students, they must have overlearned it, and thus decreased the amount of interference.

On the whole, the percentages of the number of wrong answers to the total of correct answers in the statement, negative and question pattern are:

Statement pattern:	19.3%
Negative pattern:	16.7%
Question pattern:	32.1%

It seems that the highest proportion of native language interference occurs in the question pattern. We conclude from this that either:

1. Little learning has taken place due to careless teaching, and therefore the students still persist to think in their native language, or
2. the question pattern must pose especially difficult learning problems for Iraqi students, or

It is also possible that the cause for the high percentage of mistakes is due to the two reasons.

When the students were answering correctly, they were consistent throughout: i.e., when they made a correct response in one particular pattern, they were still correct in that particular pattern in other replications.

But when the students were making wrong answers, due either to translation from Classical or Colloquial Arabic, they were not consistent. They were highly inconsistent in making mistakes due to Classical Arabic interference. Regarding the mistakes caused by Colloquial Arabic interference, they were not as highly inconsistent.

It is obvious that when a student has learned a problem well, he would make a correct solution every time he came across that same problem. But when he is not sure, he tends to use either wrong way which he thinks is the more likely solution for the problem. In the linguistic problems, when a student has not learned a pattern well, and he still uses his native language as an aid, he would either

use the Classical or the Colloquial to translate from; therefore, he would be inconsistent. Moreover he would be more inconsistent in his dependence on Classical Arabic than the Colloquial Arabic, since he consistently uses the Colloquial Arabic, while he occasionally uses the Classical Arabic; he is more used to spoken Arabic, and therefore more uniform in his thinking in the Colloquial Arabic.

Residue:

The test has shown quantitatively the amount of native language interference after two years of learning English. It has shown that the native language is a causative factor for the grammatical mistakes in written English. But because it is a controlled test, which limits the mistakes only to literal translation from the native language, the other factors that might be causes of grammatical mistakes are beyond the limits of the test.

The patterns that are similar in form and meaning in English and Arabic, and which are therefore not expected to cause learning problems have not been included in the test. It would not be possible to decide whether the correct answer results from translation from his native language or from having learnt this pattern. The conclusions would be ambiguous.

The subject of native language interference is really a fascinating one. At the same time it is very difficult to measure native language interference unless one controls the test and uses a criterion for measuring native language interference. For this reason the test items included literal translation from the native

language. The student who has not mastered the English pattern and still borrows the grammar of his native language as a frame for building up his thoughts would choose the item that fits in best with his thoughts, or the way he would communicate in Arabic.

The wrong items were placed to show:

(a) native language interference;

(b) type of interference.

But the test cannot generalize about the other probable types of mistakes that the student would make. For instance, it is not assumed that in their written compositions the students would always make exactly the same type of mistakes for each pattern. If they do, then those mistakes are caused by native language interference; if they do otherwise, then the causes are otherwise too.

Why has there been such a wide difference in the number of mistakes in each replication when they are the same pattern but only with different vocabulary? Perhaps vocabulary is the operating variable here. Then this would be evidence that indicates how wrong the Iraqi teachers are in not using the method of pattern practice in teaching grammatical patterns. For the idea behind pattern practice is that the students learn, through imitation and practice, a pattern; then they can easily substitute words. Otherwise why should any replication be more difficult than another?

Would the quantitative amount of interference in written English for a group of students of a given age and level be the same in spoken English? Would the Classical and Colloquial Arabic have the same proportions? These questions are open until a test

that can quantitatively measure the amount of native language interference in spoken English is devised.

Conclusions:

1. Native language interference is still significant after two years of learning English.
2. Both Classical Arabic interference and Colloquial Arabic interference are highly significant.
3. The percentage of mistakes due to Classical and Colloquial Arabic interference showed that the dependence on Classical Arabic is very slightly more than on Colloquial Arabic; therefore, there is almost equal dependence on translation from Classical Arabic and on Colloquial Arabic.
4. The question pattern area appeared to suffer the greatest amount of native language interference. It seems that the students are weak in asking questions in English. The habit of thinking in their own native language is so intense that they borrow it and use it when they want to ask questions in English. The method of teaching must be a fruitless one; the English teachers are more in the habit of asking questions themselves and having the students answer, either in the affirmative or the negative. This is perhaps why the negative and the statement patterns showed less interference, particularly the

negative pattern. But the students are afraid to ask questions because it involves their own active effort in forming the pattern. The teachers' fault lies in not encouraging the students to ask questions and constructing situations where the students are forced to ask many questions.

Relevance For Teachers:

Since native language interference causes grammatical mistakes, and since the dependence on the native language grammar in written English is significant, then it is the teacher's task to help the students overcome the habit of thinking in their native language and translating what they want to say into English. Foreign language teaching is not only teaching a new set of vocabulary and a new language system. Effective foreign language teaching is also the reduction of native language interference. Quite often when the Arab student wants to communicate in English, he finds himself unable to recall the foreign language grammar. He uses the ever handy native language system. Thus he finds the native language grammatical system a safety convenience and a quick relief.

Therefore it would be useful if:

- (1) the teacher pointed out to the student the pitfalls of thinking in their own language and translating from it;



(2) To make the students think in English, and make the use of English pattern an automatic habit, a great deal of practice is required. Instead of the common method of teaching the students words and asking them to use them in sentences, it would be invaluable if they were taught patterns, not words, and the use of words in sentences. If the student has not learned the grammatical patterns of the foreign language but only the words, he would quickly form an Arabic sentence in his mind and then translate it into English.

Language is learned in patterns. If the student overlearns basic patterns of the language he can later formulate hundreds of other sentences revolving around the same grammatical patterns which he has acquired by pattern practice.

(3) The students should be motivated to talk in the classroom. Unless they use the pattern over and over again in the classroom under the supervision of the teacher, then they would not have a chance for mastering the required basic pattern. The only opportunity for the majority of the Iraqi students to hear, read, speak or write English, is in the school. If the use of the grammatical patterns are not firmly established as automatic habits by the teacher in the classroom with relentless practice and use, there is no doubt that out of school all the classroom labour would be lost, and no learning accomplished.

Of course a large multitude of young Iraqis packed up in a small classroom makes it difficult for each student to have a chance to get the desirable amount of practice. But there are new methods of teaching the grammatical patterns. Nelson Brooks<sup>1</sup> mentions twelve useful kinds of pattern practice:

- |                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| (1) Repetition    | (7) Expansion      |
| (2) Inflection    | (8) Contraction    |
| (3) Replacement   | (9) Transformation |
| (4) Restatement   | (10) Integration   |
| (5) Completion    | (11) Rejoinder     |
| (6) Transposition | (12) Restoration   |

- (4) From the test results it is apparent that the students are poor in the question pattern. As we have previously pointed out, it must be the faulty teaching methods which does not encourage the students to practice asking questions. The teacher usually asks the question, the students pick up the pattern from the question and they reply either in the affirmative or the negative. But a question requires the student to make the effort of selecting the words and arranging them in a pattern to form the required question. The teacher could create situations in the classroom or narrate an incident, or bring a picture to the classroom depicting some action or make the students ask each other about something they have done, all for the purpose of stimulating the students to ask

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<sup>1</sup>Nelson Brooks, Language and Language Learning (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, Inc., 1964), p.156.

questions. The question pattern must receive a great deal of emphasis in teaching.

- (5) Nursery rhymes and little poems and plays can be a source of joyful classroom activity and also an excellent method for making the young students memorize patterns.
- (6) The hackneyed translation method should be avoided. The direct method should be followed. Thus the students would be encouraged to think in English and avoid translation from Arabic.
- (7) In conclusion the learning problems for the Iraqi students learning English are:
  - (a) The different word order for English and Arabic.
  - (b) The use of be in the present.
  - (c) The use of the articles a, an.
  - (d) Elimination of to with the verb (present).
  - (e) The use of the auxiliaries in the question pattern.

These pitfalls in the written English of the students must be prevented. The teacher who anticipates the types of difficulty that the student will have, will make preparations to prevent its happening. Once the mistake has occurred it takes much greater effort to eradicate it. It would be a much simpler task in teaching and learning if the teacher bore in mind the predicted problems and arranged lessons and took care to see that the students have enough practice in these areas of linguistic difficulties. The teacher must

be encouraged to utilize the findings of contrastive linguistic analysis to build lessons, and to make tests to discover for each grade level the pertinent linguistic problems, so that teaching of the English language would have a focused aim and a definite approach for the solution of the teaching and learning problems of English.

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