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## *Language Interference in Students' Oral and Written Expressions : Case Study : First-Year Students of English at Chlef University*

### **تداخل اللغة في تعبيرات الطلاب الشفوية والمكتوبة: دراسة حالة: السنة الأولى انجليزية بجامعة شلف**

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#### **Abstract**

The term 'correction' in foreign language learning nowadays has a negative connotation and many authors are suggesting alternative terms e.g. response, feedback etc. The primary concern of this study is to explore the kinds of errors made by a group of Algerian EFL learners in their written and oral expressions. More specifically, the study seeks to answer the following main question: What are the most common errors that Algerian students commit in their written and oral expressions? Two major sources of data were used to answer the research questions: the written test essays of 35 participants and a short talk of one student among the 35 students who participated in the written test. The researcher used a simple random sampling method to select the participants of the present study which consist of 35 male and female undergraduates at Chlef University. The findings revealed that the participants committed a great number of errors and most of them was due to L1 transfer.

#### **ملخص**

مصطلح «تصحيح» في تعلم اللغة الأجنبية في الوقت الحاضر له دلالة سلبية والعديد من المؤلفين يقترحون مصطلحات بديلة مثل الاستجابة والتعليقات وما إلى ذلك. يتمثل الشاغل الأساسي لهذه الدراسة في استكشاف أنواع الأخطاء التي ارتكبتها مجموعة من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية على المستوى الجامعي في تعابيرهم المكتوبة والشفوية. وبشكل أكثر تحديداً، تسعى الدراسة للإجابة عن السؤال التالي: ما هي الأخطاء الأكثر شيوعاً التي يرتكبها الطلاب الجزائريون في تعابيرهم الكتابية والشفوية؟ تم استخدام مصدرين رئيسيين للبيانات للإجابة على أسئلة البحث: مقالات الاختبار الكتابي لـ 35 مشاركاً من الجامعة المختارة وحديث قصير لطالب واحد من بين 35 طالباً شاركوا في الاختبار الكتابي. استخدم الباحث طريقة بسيطة لأخذ العينات العشوائية لاختيار المشاركين في الدراسة الحالية التي تتكون من 35 طالباً وطالبة في جامعة الشلف. أوضحت النتائج أن المشاركين في هذه الدراسة ارتكبوا عدداً كبيراً من الأخطاء وكان معظمها بسبب نقل اللغة بشكل إيجابي.

#### **الكلمات المفتاحية:**

التحليل التبايني،

تحليل الخطأ،

الالاخطاء بين اللغات،

الالاخطاء داخل اللغة.

## 1. Introduction

A language error is defined as “*a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner*” [1]. Error correction is seen as a form of feedback given to learners on their language use. No teacher can deny the fact that correcting the errors made by students when they speak or write is one of the most difficult tasks in language acquisition. Thus, every language practitioner or teacher should consider some of the following issues about error correction: the difference between a mistake and an error, how much correction should be made, at what phases the teacher should correct the error and how the teacher can correct the learner without de-motivating him/her. One crucial point in the field of Error Correction is to know the nature of learning a foreign or second language, i.e, how do we learn a second language? We have to investigate what happens in the mind of human beings through mental process to learn a language. In this respect, two phenomena have been distinguished by the American linguist Krashen [2 ] when he clearly distinguished between: first language acquisition and second language learning. Different schools appeared in linguistics and psycholinguistics whose aim was to analyse learners’ errors and to decipher their sources. Among those schools, we find the structural behaviouristic school and the transformational generative grammarians.

Contrastive analysis (CA) and error analysis (EA) have been regarded as the two main pillars in the domain of second and foreign language learning. Generally, as Keshavarz stated, “*...there have been two major approaches to the study of learners’ errors, namely Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis.*” He further discussed that, “*Error Analysis emerged on account of the shortcomings of Contrastive Analysis which was the favored way of describing learners’ language in the 1950s and 1960s*” [3]. The process involved in CA is the comparison of learners’ mother tongue and the target language. Based on the similarities or differences between two languages, predictions were made on errors that learners would be likely or disposed to make as a result [4]. Unlike

CA which tries to describe differences and similarities of L1 and L2, James [5 ] stated that, EA attempts to describe learners’ interlanguage ( learners’ version of the target language) independently and objectively. He believed that the most distinct feature of EA is that the mother tongue is not supposed to be mentioned for comparison. The purpose of Error Analysis is, in fact, to find “*what the learner knows and does not know*” and to “*ultimately enable the teacher to supply him not just with the information that his hypothesis is wrong, but also, importantly, with the right sort of information or data for him to form a more adequate concept of a rule in the target language*” [6]. The primary aim of this study is to explore the kinds of errors committed by a group of Algerian EFL learners at university level in their written and oral expressions. The study also aims to investigate the use of the mother tongue in foreign language learning.

## 2. First Language Acquisition versus Second Language Learning

Applied linguistics is the attempt to put the insights resulting from linguistic research to practical uses. These include first and second language teaching (Such as: lexicography, translation....etc). Our focus of linguistic application is the field of language teaching which focuses in turn on the learner and the language learning process. How is this language which is the object of study of the linguist being learnt? We have to investigate what happens in the mind of human beings through mental processes to learn a language. In this respect, two phenomena have been distinguished Krashen [2] when he talked about: first language acquisition and second language learning

**First language acquisition:** The term acquisition is used to refer to subconscious learning which is not influenced by explicit instruction about the L2 system or about errors against the L2 rule system. It takes place in a natural environment. Language data is not arranged as in a language teaching situation. The infant is exposed to an unlimited data. The child is acquiring many things at the same time. Hence, first language acquisition is a mental psychological process which is natural, spontaneous and unconscious.

**Second language learning:** The term learning on the other hand is a conscious process which results from an explicit instruction about errors against the L2 rule system. A second language is learnt later in life. The individual already functions with a language system since he possesses a verbal behavior and learning in this case is conscious. The data is arranged by syllabus designers and the learner is not exposed to unlimited data like the infant. It takes place under formal instruction. The learner is not necessarily young.

In other words, for first language acquisition the child has biological capacities which enable him/her to acquire language. This was called by Noam Chomsky LAD (*Language Acquisition Device*). The latter is a predisposition of language acquisition of the environment in which children are born (Arabic in an Arabic environment. English in an English environment...etc). To sum up, infants are innately endowed with the ability to acquire a natural language and all they need to set the process of language acquisition going are natural language data. First language acquisition is easy and second language learning is difficult.

### 3. The Definition of Errors

Before the 1960's, during the dominance of the behaviouristic view upon language there existed a dominated view of language to consider learners' errors as something undesirable. Making errors was seen as a sign of mislearning and regarded as undesirable to proper processes of language learning. According to the behaviouristic point of view, the reason behind making errors lies in inadequate teaching methods which if had been "perfect" they would never be committed. This way of thinking was considered to be naive as there is nothing to be called "perfect" methodology especially with the appearance of the Universal Grammar concept proposed by Chomsky in 1965 [7]. The latter claimed that each human being has an innate capacity that can guide him through a vast number of sentence generation possibilities. Since then, a shift by language teachers towards the cognitive approach has started. Chomsky's theory contributes to raise researcher's interests about

learners' errors as a source of hypotheses formation.

The importance of errors in language learning was first advocated by Corder [8]. He proved that strategies of L2 learners could be inferred through the analysis of their errors and that could be helpful for researchers of L2 learning process. Selinker [9] highlighted two fundamental contributions of Corder's study in L2 learning. The first one is that the learner's errors are systematic and the second is that they are not "negative" or "interfering" but a positive factor, indicative of testing hypothesis.

There are a lot of definitions developed for the concept of "error". According to Lennon [10], an error is "*a linguistic form or combination of forms which, in the same context and under the same context and under similar conditions of production, would, in all likelihood, not be produced by the speakers' native speaker counterparts.*" On the other hand, differences between the mistake which is a performance error due to a random guess or slip and the error that refers to idiosyncrasies in the interlanguage of the learner manifesting the learner's system of operation while learning [8]. The latter can be seen as a deviation from the adult's grammar of a native speaker which reflects the interlanguage of the learner.

Errors are systematic and may give valuable insight into language acquisition because they are obstacles in the learner's underlying competence. When native speakers make mistakes, they can identify and correct them immediately because they have almost full knowledge of the linguistic structure of their mother tongue [11]. Non-native speakers, L2 learners not only make mistakes, they also commit errors and as they have only an incomplete knowledge of the target language, they are not always able to correct the errors that they make. Thus the learners' errors reflect a lack of underlying competence in the language that they are learning.

### 4. Types of Errors and Theirs Sources:

Errors are indispensable to the learning process but why do learners make errors and find it so difficult to correct them?. Researchers dealing with second language acquisition [6], [10] agree that one of the

major causes of errors is language transfer. Yet, we can mention other related errors' sources as follow:

#### 4.1. Language transfer or interlingual interference.

In this type, errors are caused by mother tongue interference. Eg1. I followed him yesterday slowly in the street. (Arabic thinking: negative transfer from Arabic to English) E.g2: I received confidential informations from the police. (Negative transfer from French to English)

4.2. *Intralingual interference*: this kind of errors occurs during the learning process of the second language at a stage when the learners have not really acquired the knowledge. In addition, errors are also caused by the difficulty or the problem of language itself. Intralingual errors are also subdivided to the following categories [12]:

##### a) *Over-generalisation*:

E.g: He can swims. Instead of saying : He can swim or He swims.

##### b) *Simplification*: ( Redundancy/ reduction)

E.g. I studied English for two year. ( Instead of years)

##### c) *Communication base*:

E.g: Using "airball" instead of balloon (coinage)

*Induced errors*: Due to the teacher's presentation of the material: E.g: as if= like. The learner will write the following sentence:

E.g: She cries as if the baby cries instead of writing: She cries like a baby.

##### d) *Analogical errors*: ( started, goed)

E.g: He goed to school on foot.( Instead of saying went)

e) Ignorance of rule restrictions: the learner applies rules to context where they are not applicable (e.g. He made me to go rest" through extension of the pattern "He asked/wanted me to go").

f) Incomplete application of rules: the learner fails to use a fully developed structure (e.g. "You like to sing?" in place of "Do you like to sing?")

g) False hypothesis: the learners do not fully understand a distinction in the target language (e.g.

the use of "was" as a marker of past tense in "One day I was travelled.").

## 5. Error Analysis:

Errors are seen as a systematic deviation made by learners who have not yet mastered the rules of L2. A learner cannot self-correct his/her errors because they are a reflective product of his/her current stage of L2 development. Mistakes, on the other hand, are defined as a random confirmation slip caused by tiredness, excitement or other sources, and the learner can readily self-correct his/her mistakes. Error Analysis is one of the most influential theories of second language acquisition. It is concerned with the analysis of the errors committed by L2 learners by comparing the learners' acquired norms with the target language norms and explaining the identified errors. Error Analysis in language teaching and learning is the study of the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a language, especially a foreign language [13]. According to James, EA refers to "*the study of linguistic ignorance, the investigation of what people do not know and how they attempt to cope with their ignorance*" [5].

Another definition of error analysis is given by Brown who defined error analysis as "*the process to observe, analyze, and classify the deviations of the rules of the second languages and then to reveal the systems operated by learners*"[1]. As stated by AbiSamara [14], Error Analysis can be viewed as "*a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on errors committed by learners*". Corder views errors as valuable information for three beneficiaries: for teachers, it clues them on the progress of the students; for researchers, it provides evidence as to how language is acquired or learned; for learners themselves, it gives them resources in order to learn [6].

Brown states that there are two main sources of errors, namely, interlingual errors and intralingual errors [1]. Interlingual (Interference) Errors are those errors that are traceable to first language interference. These errors are attributable to negative interlingual transfer. The term "interlingua" was first introduced by Selinker who used this term to refer to the systematic knowledge of an L2 which is independent of both the

learner's L1 and the target language [15]. According to Kavaliauskiene, transfer of errors may occur because the learners lack the necessary information in the second language or the intentional capacity to activate the appropriate second language routine [16].

Transfer is of two kinds: positive and negative. The transfer may prove to be justified because the structure of the two languages is similar – this case is called 'positive transfer' or 'facilitation', or it may prove unjustified because the structure of the two languages are different – that case is called 'negative transfer' or 'interference' [17].

As far as the intralingual errors are concerned, they result from faulty or partial learning of the target language rather than language transfer [18]. Richards cites four main types of intralingual errors, namely: (1) overgeneralization, (2) ignorance of rule restrictions, (3) incomplete application of rules, and (4) false concepts hypothesized [12]. Later he identifies six sources of errors: (1) interference, (2) overgeneralization, (3) performance errors, (4) markers of transitional competence, (5) strategies of communication and assimilation, and (6) teacher-induced errors.

Stenson states three main reasons for errors, namely, (1) incomplete acquisition of the target grammar, (2) exigencies of the learning/teaching situation, and (3) errors due to normal problems of language performance [19].

Committing errors is one of the most unavoidable things in the world. Students, in the process of learning language, profit from the errors that they make by obtaining feedback to make new attempts that successively approximate their desired objectives. Vahdatinejad maintains that error analyses can be used to determine what a learner still needs to be taught. It provides the necessary information about what is lacking in the learner's competence [20]. He also makes a distinction between errors and lapses (simple mistakes). According to him, lapses are produced even by native speakers, and can be corrected by themselves. They call for on the spot correction rather than remediation, which is needed for errors. Errors, if studied, could reveal a developing system of the

student's L2 language and this system is dynamic and open to changes and resetting of parameters.

In the past few years, there has been a large and growing amount of literature on error analysis. In a recent study conducted by Sarfraz to examine the errors made by 50 undergraduate Pakistani students in written essays, he found that the overwhelming majority of errors the students made resulted from learners' interlanguage process and some errors resulted from mother tongue interference [21]. Darus and Subramaniam, using Corder's (1967) model on error analysis, examined errors in a corpus of 72 essays written by 72 Malay students. They found that students' errors were of six types, viz., in singular/plural form, verb tense, word choice, preposition, subject-verb agreement and word order [22]. In addition, Ridha examined English writing samples of 80 EFL college students and then categorized the errors according to the following taxonomy: grammatical, lexical/semantic, mechanics, and word order types of errors. The results showed that most of the students' errors can be due to L1 transfer. Furthermore, she found that most of the learners rely on their mother tongue in expressing their ideas. She added that although the rating processes showed that the participants' essays included different types of errors, the grammatical errors and the mechanical errors were the most serious and frequent ones [23].

As Shaffer mentioned, one of the questions facing every ESL/EFL teacher is how to correct oral errors and how much to correct [24]. Researcher opinions vary widely on this: from no correction to extensive correction, from immediate to delayed correction, and from implicit to explicit correction. Language learners also have their own opinions on how and whether they wish to have their oral errors corrected by their teacher in the classroom setting. These opinions may be at odds with those of the experts, leaving the classroom instructor with more questions about error correction than answers. In his article, Moss supported this position and claimed that, when deciding how to respond to students' oral errors there are a number of questions we need to ask ourselves [25]. First of all, 'Should learners' errors be corrected?' In this regard, there are wide differences of opinion, but

perhaps one of the most forceful reasons for carrying out correction is that many learners expect their errors to be corrected and can feel disappointed or resentful if they are ignored. The second reason is that, there is the danger that by leaving errors untreated, the defective language might serve as an input model and be acquired by other students in the class. Thirdly, the provision of corrective feedback can speed up the process of language learning by providing information about rules and the limits of language use, which would otherwise take students a long time to deduce on their own.

## 6. Teachers' Attitude to Errors:

Teachers are often afraid of their students' making errors. They feel that students might learn their mistakes and so they must make sure that everything they say is correct. This attitude goes back to the earlier belief, influenced by the behaviourist model of learning, which maintains that the language can be learnt by repeating correct forms until they become automatic, that is why repeating incorrect forms is harmful. It is now widely agreed that language is not learnt this way: it is a system of rules that the learner has to acquire, that trying out language and making errors are natural and unavoidable parts of this process. Doff explains that learners are applying rules from their own first languages and they are applying rules which they have internalised but they are in some way intermediate between their native languages (L1) and the target language (L2) [26].

### Error treatment:

Error treatment is a very complicated and weighty problem. Language teachers need to be armed with some theoretical foundations and be aware of what they are doing in the classroom. Henrickson lists the "five fundamental questions" and reviews the literature that addresses them [27]:

1. *Should errors be corrected?*
2. *If so, when should errors be corrected?*
3. *Which learner errors should be corrected?*
4. *How should learner errors be corrected?*
5. *Who should correct learner errors?*

Second language acquisition theory has "answers" to four of these questions, answers that are, themselves hypotheses. Hendrickson predicts that if error correction is done according to the principles described below, it will be effective.

### 1. *Should errors be corrected?*

According to the second language acquisition theory presented here, when error correction "works", it does so by helping the learner change his or her conscious mental representation of a rule. In other words, it affects learned competence by informing the learner that his or her current version of a conscious rule is wrong. Thus, second language acquisition theory implies that when the goal is learning, errors should indeed be corrected (but not at all times; see below; and not all rules, even if the goal is learning). The theory maintains however, that error correction is not of use for acquisition. Acquisition occurs, according to the input hypothesis, when acquirers understand input for its meaning, not when they produce output and focus on form.

### 2. *When should errors be corrected?*

Concerning this problem, the most controversial issue is to treat them immediately or to delay. First, we are confronted with a dilemma—fluency versus accuracy. For communicative purpose, delayed correction is usually preferred. Some advanced students believe that when to correct errors is determined by the type of errors committed. For instance, if they are pronunciation or grammatical errors, immediate correction is preferable, for post-correction cannot make learners remember anything. Furthermore, the overall situation in the classroom is also important. When the whole class is familiar with a word, but only one of them is singled out for being corrected, he or she would feel awkward. So, we can see that when to correct is very complicated. Both the teachers' intuition and the feedback from the students are equally important.

### 3. *Which errors should be corrected?*

Learners' errors are usually classified in different categories. Global errors hinder communication and they prevent the learner from comprehending some

aspects of the message. Local errors only affect a single element of a sentence, but do not prevent a message from being heard. Global errors need not be corrected and they are generally held true. But the expressions such as “a news”, or “an advice” are systematic errors, and they need to be corrected. As for pre- systematic errors, teachers can simply provide the correct one. For systematic errors, since learners have already had the linguistic competence, they can explain this kind of errors and correct them themselves. So teachers just remind them when they commit such errors. As to what kind of errors should be corrected, it needs teachers’ intuition and understanding of errors. At the same time, the teacher should consider the purpose of the analysis and analyze them in a systematic way.

#### **4. How should errors be corrected?**

According to James , it is sensible to follow the three principles in error correction [5]. Firstly, the techniques involved in error correction would be able to enhance the students’ accuracy in expression. Secondly, the students’ affective factors should be taken into consideration and the correction should not be face-threatening to the students.

Some scholars believed that teachers’ indirect correction is highly appreciated. They either encourage students to do self-correction in heuristic method or present the correct form, so students couldn’t feel embarrassed. Compare the two situations:

(1) Student: “What means this word?”

Teacher: “No, listen, what does this word mean?”

(2) Student: “What means this word?”

Teacher: “What does it mean? Well, it is difficult to explain, but it means...”

It is obvious that teacher’s remodeling in (2) is more natural and sensible than the direct interruption in (1).

Up till now, both the theory and the application have been illustrated, in the next section we are going to deal with both the significance and limitations of error analysis in language teaching and learning.

### **7. Ways of Correction:**

There are several ways of correction that can be employed in the classroom.

#### **7.1. Self-correction:**

After the student recognizes what is incorrect in his/her response, s/he should be able to correct him/herself. Self- correction is the best technique, because the student will remember it better.

#### **7.2. Peer correction:**

If the student cannot correct him/herself the teacher can encourage other students to supply correction. This technique is to be applied tactfully, so that the student who originally made the mistake will not feel humiliated. In the case of errors, it is useful if after peer correction the teacher goes back to the student who made the error and gets him/her to say it correctly. Edge mentions the following advantages of peer correction:

- It encourages cooperation, students get used to the idea that they can learn from each other

- Both learners (who made the error and who corrects) are involved in listening to and thinking about the language

- The teacher gets a lot of important information about the learners’ ability - if students learn to practice peer correction without hurting each other’s feelings, they will do the same in pair-work activities. However, it may happen that whenever the teacher asks for peer correction from the whole class, it is always the same students who answer. In this case the teacher has to make sure that other students are involved as well.

#### **7.3. Teacher correction:**

If no one can correct, the teacher must realise that the point has not yet been learnt properly. In that case the teacher can re-explain the problematic item of language, especially if the teacher sees that the majority of the class has the same problem. There should be more repetition and practice necessary done by the learners. We must not forget that the main aim of correction is to facilitate the students to learn

the new language item correctly. That is why it is important that after correction the teacher has to ask the student who originally made the error or mistake to give the correct response.

## 8. Methodology

This section presents the research methodology used in this study and gives information about the population and the sample. It also describes the data collection instruments and procedures. It finally describes the validity and reliability of the instruments and gives information about the data analysis.

### 8.1. The Study Population and Sample

The study population consisted of 36 first year LMD students studying English as a Foreign language in Hassiba Ben-Bouali University. Mouton defines a sample as elements selected with the intention of finding out something about the total population from which they are taken. The sample included in this study consists of 35 undergraduate students during the first semester of the academic year 2018/2019. To select the participants of the present study, a simple random sampling method was used in both experiments because it is regarded as one of the most reliable methods to obtain a representative sample. The participants, selected for the purpose of this study, are between 18 and 20 years of age. All of them were native speakers of Arabic, who also had a working knowledge of modern standard Arabic. They live in an exclusively Arabic-speaking community. Like most Algerian students, the ones who participated in this study had experienced approximately the same number of 7 years of education through the middle and the secondary education system. All the participants are homogeneous in terms of their linguistic, educational, and socioeconomic background. They speak Arabic dialect at home. All the participants did not receive any English language instruction in English speaking countries nor had they been to any English speaking countries to have any kind of English exposure.

### 8.2. Data Collection:

Two major sources of data were used to find answers to the research questions:

1. First research tool: The written essays of 35

participants of the chosen university. The topics given in the essays were general but argumentative in nature.

2. Second research tool: The short talk of one student among the 35 students who participated in the written test.

### 8.3. Data Collection Procedure:

The first research instrument: All the 35 participants were required to write on one of the five following different topics: *politics, university life, sports, my favourite job or family problems*. They were asked to write approximately 150 to 300 words within a period of one hour. The participants were informed that they had to start with an outline, then a first draft and a final draft. The students did not know that their paragraphs are going to be under investigation. The second research experiment: One student was randomly chosen from the entire population to produce a short talk. Its purpose was to obtain oral data. The subject was asked to talk for five minutes about himself, his daily routine and about life in Algeria or in the local area where he lived. Ten minutes before the talk he was given some guidelines to help him organize his oral presentation and to avoid silent periods.

It consisted of the following points:

- a) Place where he lived.
- b) Knowledge of languages.
- c) Things he liked.
- d) Habits he had.
- e) What Algerian people do on holidays.
- f) What Algerian people like.

For the data analysis, the talk was divided into examples which in most cases correspond to the different sentences he produced.

### 8.4. Reliability and Validity:

#### 8.4.1. Reliability:

Polit and Hungler refer to reliability as the degree of consistency with which an instrument measures the attribute it is designed to evaluate. The researcher used a test-retest device to measure the reliability of the instrument. A pilot study was conducted through selecting 30 students from the target population



randomly. These students did not take part in the actual study. The students were asked to write on one of the essays. Accordingly, the students' results showed consistency in the answers.

#### 8.4.2. Validity:

The validity of an instrument is the degree to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure. To ensure the face and content of the study instrument, the method of trustee's validity was employed. A panel of judges consisting of two academic college instructors were asked to evaluate the given topics (for writing and speaking). They approved that topics were taken from materials appropriate to students' standard and suit their ages, and that the rubric set was very clear.

#### 8.5. Data Analysis:

The analysis of written essays will be derived from Corder's method [8] on error analysis. This method has three steps: (1) collection of sample errors, (2) identification of errors and (3) description of errors.

For the short talk, the type of data analysis applied was interlanguage analysis because for the purpose of the study, his IL had to be analysed not only as an independent system but also related to his native language and the target language the learner was aiming at; this way, in the examples produced four aspects were considered: the IL form, the literal translation of the IL form, the hypothesized target language form and the hypothesized native language form. The language topic selected to analyse the nature of transfer was adverbial placement since it has been a long debated issue in English, whereas few studies deal with Spanish-English interlanguage word order in this issue.

#### 8.6. Conclusion

The researcher used a simple random sampling method to select the participants of the present study which consist of 35 male and female undergraduates at Chlef University. In the first experiment, 35 participants were asked to write a well-developed essay from 150 to 200 words within one hour during one of their English classes. In the second experiment, one student was asked to talk for 5 minutes about a given topic. This section described the research methodology used

in this study, including the population, sample, data collection instruments as well as strategies used to ensure the reliability and validity of the study.

### 9. Results and discussion

#### 9.1. First experiment results

In the second experiment the subject produced the following talk:

*Well I live in Chlef. . Chlef is in the centre of my country, Algeria. I speak a... two languages very well and also I speak a little French. And I like very much the football and also other sports. And often go to the stadium because I like very much the sports' world and also the internet very much. Everyday when I have breakfast I... drink milk with coffee and some bread or cakes .And the Algerians, the people of Algerians go on holiday normally to the beach in summer and also to the countryside... Also the people Algerian, especially old people, go in winter to natural baths like; Bouhnia, Chiger....etc . At the Feasts where the people are in their homes with their family they enjoy eating delicious and traditional meals such as: couscous, mesfouf.....etc. Algerians like to visit each other in feasts and exchange some food and cakes, they help poor people with clothes, money and food like meat in Aid El-Adha. Most Algerians on weekends prefer to stay at home with family because they don't have nice public places or gardens to go. And finally I like very much the sport, and I like the Internet especially the facebook because I can chat with people from other foreign countries.*

It can be noticed that the subject tends to follow the native-like placement relying on his own perception of similarity between both languages, resorting to the process and applying the strategy of similarity to the L1, such as:

*1. and also I speak little French.*

The same applies to the following example where the occurrence of an intensifier adjunct between the verb and the object shows that the learner perceives that the Mother Tongue choice between Subject-Object-Adjunct (SOA) and Subject-Adjunct-Object (SOA) is the same as the Target Language one, creating an interlingual identification which leads him to apply

the process of transfer:

2. *I like very much the football and also other sports.*

The use of interlingual identifications can also be observed in this example:

3. *And often go to the stadium*

In this example the subject also produces an empty category, omitting the subject which seems to be performance- related because in the rest of the sentences he does not produce this empty category; moreover, the subject’s perception of the similarity between both languages, ie., his psycho typology leads him to the production of parallel structures in both languages. The common reference he uses is also present in:

4. *...the people of Algerians go on holiday normally to the beach in summer...*

This structure is the result of applying the abstract organizing principle that adverbials can take the same position as in the Mother Tongue; furthermore, the overuse of the adjective in a context where it does not apply also shows that he is following the IL principles.

5. *Most Algerians on weekends prefer to stay at home...*

Another example of a wrong placement of time-adjunct shows that the learner recognises that the MT choice between SOA and SAO is the same as the TL one, creating an interlingual identification which leads him to apply the process of transfer.

6. *And I like very much the football.*

The use of “the” with most words is another evidence of the language transfer from Arabic (MT) to English (TL).

7. *And finally I like very much the sport, and I like the Internet.*

The overuse of “and” in the whole passage or the short talk is clear due to the language transfer. Most Arab speakers frequently use “and” in their speech in initial and mid-positions.

The similarity the learner establishes between both languages is clearly noticed if we observe the talk he produced. As can be seen, the combination SAO

and SOA is used in the MT as it is in the IL. More time adjuncts are produced in initial placement, the same tendency that can be observed in the IL; as for place adjuncts they tend to occur in final position. It is quite obvious that the subject creates interlingual identifications which enable him to apply the process of transfer resorting to the strategy of creating parallel structures.

## 9.2. Second experiment result:

In this section, the researcher presents and discusses the findings of the study in the light of its objectives. First, the errors made by the students are classified; second, the common errors are identified with illustrative examples; and finally, these errors made by the learners are corrected by examples. Table 1 shows the types, numbers and percentages of errors committed by the participants in their written work.

Type of error	Frequency of errors	Percentages (%)
<b>1. Verb tense</b>	83	11.6 %
<b>2. Word order</b>	57	8%
<b>3. Subject/verb agreement</b>	78	10.9%
<b>4. Pronoun</b>	52	7.3%
<b>5. Spelling</b>	88	12.3%
<b>6. Capitalization</b>	44	6.1%
<b>7. Preposition</b>	60	8.4%
<b>8. Article</b>	83	11.6%
<b>9. Double negative</b>	49	6.8%
<b>10. Sentence fragment</b>	117	16.4%
<b>Total</b>	711	100 %

**Table1: Analysis of errors produced by Algerian EFL learners.**

Now the ten types of errors made by the students in their essays will be presented.

### 1. Verb tense:

Error identification:

1. People don’t likes politicians.
2. A lot of families has problems.

Error correction

1. People don't like politicians.

2. A lot of families have problems

### 2. Double negative:

Error identification:

1. Most students don't have no idea about the LMD system .

2. Students don't have nothing to practice in the campus.

Error correction:

1. Most students have no any idea about the LMD system.

2. Students don't have anything to practice in the campus.

### 3. Sentence fragment:

Error identification:

1. Teachers who teach us very qualified.

2. Sometimes practise football or handball on weekends..

Error correction:

1. Teachers who teach us are very qualified.

2. Sometimes I practise football or handball on weekends.

### 4. Subject /verb agreement:

Error identification:

1. A lot of people in Algeria is not happy about the services.

2. Each of the groups have 32 students.

Error correction:

1. A lot of people in Algeria are not happy about the services.

2. Each of the groups has 30 students.

### 5. Capitalisation:

Error identification:

1. algerians like football so much.

2. My friend ahmed and i practise sport in our free time.

Error correction:

1. Algerians like football so much.

2. My friend Ahmed and I practise sport in our free time.

### 6. Word order:

Error identification:

1. I like also to go to the internet.

2. What they are doing for young people?

Error correction:

1. I also like to go to the internet.

2. What are they doing for young people?

### 7. Prepositions:

The great majority of the participants in this study demonstrated confusion for the right usage of prepositions as shown in the examples below.

Error identification:

1. I am interested on educating myself.

2. Authorities must take care about jobless people.

Error correction:

1. I am interested in educating myself.

2. Authorities must take care of jobless people.

### 8. Articles:

Error identification:

1. Algeria is very rich country.

2. Normally we are richest people in the region.

Error correction:

1. Algeria is a very rich country.

2. Normally we are the richest people in the region.

### 9. Pronouns:

Error identification:

1. The subjects who I study at university are very difficult.

2. My Friends and myself practise a lot of sports.

Error correction:

1. The subjects which/that I study at university are

very difficult.

2. My friends and I practise a lot of sports.

### 10. Spelling:

Error identification:

1. My favourite hobby is reading history books

2. Grammar is one of the difficult modules we study.

Error correction:

1. My favourite hobby is reading history book

2. Grammar is one of the difficult modules we study.

### 10. Conclusion

This study has given an account of the main errors made by a group of Algerian EFL learners at university level in their written and spoken work. Based on the discussion of the findings and the examples given, it could be concluded that the Arabic speakers in this study committed a great number of errors due to L1 transfer. The overt influences of Arabic on the students' writing and speaking of English indicate that language teachers need to take careful stock of the transfer and interference of the students' mother tongue in their spoken or written production. Therefore, one way to highlight the influences of the mother tongues on the students' learning of English is to collect these errors and ask the students to analyze them and if they could to correct them. Some errors need to be handled; otherwise, they will become fossilized. Error analysis is significant, but it also has its limitations. First, there is a danger in too much attention to learners' errors and in the classroom teacher tends to become so preoccupied with noticing errors that the correct utterance in the second language will go unnoticed. While the attempt to diminish errors is an important criterion for increasing language proficiency, the ultimate goal of second language learning is the attainment of communicative fluency in a language. Another shortcoming in error analysis is the overstressing of production data. Factually language comprehension is as important as production. It also happens that production lends itself to analysis and thus becomes the prey of researchers, but comprehension data is equally important in developing an understanding of

the process of language acquisition. Thirdly, it fails to account for the strategy of avoidance. A learner who for one reason or another avoids a particular sound, word, structure or discourse category may be assumed incorrectly to have no difficulty therewith. The absence of error therefore does not necessarily reflect native like competence since learners may be avoiding the very structure that poses difficulty for them. Finally, error analysis can keep us too closely focused on specific languages rather than viewing universal aspects of language.

### Conflict of Interest

The author declares that he has no conflict of interest

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