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Title:

A Workbook in Contrastive Analysis (413)



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A Workbook in Contrastive Analysis

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Chapter One

1- Aspects of Contrastive Linguistics:

Contrastive linguistics aims "to provide a complete and objective description of contrasts between two languages" (Vintar, 2002), and "deals with the application of these findings in practice, which basically means to evaluate the results (i.e. differences) and determine the consequences..." (Vintar, 2002). It can be said that applied contrastive analysis is to predict the points of interference between the native language of the learner and the target language.

2- Levels of Contrastive Analysis:

Contrastive analysis is usually described as a broad field of study, since it can be applied on major aspects of language, such as the phonological, the semantic, the syntactic and the pragmatic. The pragmatic level includes "text studies and some aspects of the sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic perspective" (Vintar, 2002), and "portrays language as a social – cultural phenomenon intertwined with the subjective reality as perceived by the speaker" (Vintar, 2002).

Results can be efficient only if a scientific description of the target language is compared with its parallel description of the native language of the learner.

Actually, early studies of contrastive linguistics tend to focus on what they call "the micro linguistic features", which concentrate on particular aspects of language such as phonology, grammar, and lexicon, and consider the sentence as the largest analyzable unit. The research questions suggested are:

- *"What are the consonant phonemes in languages X and Y? How do they differ in inventory, realization, and distribution?"*
- *What is the tense system of languages X and Y?*
- *What are the verbs of saying in languages X and Y?"* (Johansson, 2000).

However, with the development in linguistic studies, contrastive analysis is broadened to include "macro linguistic features", which study language skills within situation and context; that is, text linguistics and discourse analysis, taking into

consideration the communicative function of language. So the research question become like.

- *"How is cohesion expressed in language X and Y?*
- *How are the speech acts of apologizing and requesting expressed in languages X and Y?*
- *How are conversations opened and closed in languages X and Y?" (Johansson, 2000).*

The steps that should be followed in order to apply a contrastive study are explained in the following:

A. The phonological level: contrastive phonology means:

- a- *"to contrast the phonetic set of both languages and establish the differences. These may lie in the pronunciation of a phoneme that occurs in both languages or in the absence of certain phonemes in one of the languages.*
- b- *To compare the rules for the position of word stress if there are any" (Vintar, 2002).*

An aspect that is linked with contrastive phonology is intonation. *"Intonation, coupled with*

paraverbal means of communication like mime and gesture, can convey very different meanings and is often the source of misunderstanding between native and non-native speakers of a language" (Vintar, 2002). In the case of the mother tongue, it is easy to distinguish between the tiny variations and ascribe meaning to them, but when it comes to the target language, the role of intonation and pronunciation is neglected in many cases, which would consequently generate errors.

"In contrasting the set of phonemes of two languages we must deal with the graphemes as well. In some languages as in English, a single grapheme may indicate several different phonemes or vice versa. It is important to contrast this feature with the languages that are strictly grapheme-bound". (Vintar, 2002).

b- The semantic level: In contrasting the lexicon of two languages, there are some aspects that should be considered. One such field may be the suffixes used in word formation, for example, the English suffix *-ly* that converts adjectives into adverbs, and the suffixes *-less*, *-ness*.

c- **The syntactic level:** in the case of two different languages, the purpose of contrasting them plays an important role, since it removes the difficulties that may result from the differences in the syntactic structures between the two languages. Here are some aspects of the syntactic analysis:

- 1- The structural differences arise from the kinds of the grammatical relations used especially in the case of inflections.
- 2- The order of elements according to their importance in the sentence structure. This aspect should be compared because it shows great variations across languages. *"Nearly all languages of the world can in some way or another make an item of information stand out in a sentence. Most European languages use sentence structure as one tool for doing this. Some other ways are introductory or emphatic subjects and objects, emphatic adverbs and adjectives and intonation. The rules for the position of information at the end of the sentence are quite firm and are intuitively obeyed by most speakers, even by non-natives", (Vintar, 2002).*

d- **Text Analysis and Pragmatics:** Discourse or register analysis is an important aspect for describing a language. There are rules for putting words together to form sentences, and there are rules for putting sentences together to form texts. To put sentences randomly means to get non-coherent and meaningless texts. The problem arises from the fact that the grammatical rules are explicit, whereas the rules for forming texts are not. Besides, they are confined to factors, such as the context, the cultural setting, the intonation, and the expectations of the writer. An example of the idea is the case of the formal letter which is used to convey important information and make a good impression. The rules of writing the formal letter vary across languages, and if it is not written in its correct form, the consequences may not be good. That is why *"the task of the contrastive text analysis and contrastive pragmatics is to compare these rules and factors and establish the differences which can help the learners of a language to communicate efficiently"*. (Vintar, 2002).

3- Mother Tongue Interference and Universal Grammar:

The impact of the learner's previous knowledge of the languages that she has encountered can not be neglected; rather it is better to deal with it, and even make use of it to achieve better results. This is because whenever the learner wants to use the foreign language, especially in writing, he tries to scan this previous knowledge, particularly the native language, in order to find similarities to what he wants to express. Actually the differences between the mother tongue of the learner and the foreign language may not be the only source of errors, for there are kinds of misleading similarities. Since the task of contrastive linguistics is to reveal the similarities and differences between languages, it is necessary to apply this kind of analysis on students' writings to achieve an advanced understanding of the types of their errors and to find the suitable solutions.

Some linguists refer to what is called "universal innate principles" that guide the forces in second language acquisition. They go further in identifying two factors that interact when the learner transfers elements from his native language to the target language.

1. *"Learner's perception of L1 to L2 distance (learner's psychology).*
2. *Degree of markedness in L1 structure", (Muller, 2002).*

Rita Muller in her paper Language Acquisition and Universal Grammar (2002) emphasizes the existence of a universal grammar, which is the source of the target language grammar formation, and that there is a relationship between language transfer and the level of this universal grammar on the part of the learner. If the learner has a full access to universal grammar, then this universal grammar will be the starting point when he uses the target language. And if the learner has a partial access to universal grammar, the result is that his native language will play an important role. But if he has no access to universal grammar, then his native language will be the starting point.

4- Problems of Applying Contrastive Analysis:

Despite the fact that the above mentioned procedures for applying a contrastive analysis on languages, - for the purpose of predicting the similarities and differences between them -, seem useful, there are still some problems. The first problem is of that equivalence. *"How do we know*

what to compare? What is expressed in one language by, for example, modal auxiliaries could be expressed in other languages in quite different ways. Then, we do not get very far by a comparison of modal auxiliaries. That is why most contrastive linguistics make use of translation as a means of establishing a cross-linguistic relationship". (Johansson, 2000).

Another problem is related to the determination of what is correct in language. "Most English-speaking nations now have a three-dimensional variation of class, region, and ethnic origin that determines individual language pattern. Nevertheless, there is not only a tacit but an overt acceptance of the existence of 'standard X English', where X=UK, US, Australian etc. Questions of 'correctness' and 'error' relate to the degree of approximation to the standard type the native speaker or the learner has adopted. In other words, we may describe an error as: an utterance which a native speaker of the standard national form of the language would note, and might allow to pass uncorrected in a spoken standard version, but would not accept in formal written forms of the language". (Howells, 2004).

5- Techniques of Contrastive Analysis:

After browsing the theoretical discussion about how languages are contrasted, it is important to see the application of contrastive linguistics which is presented through various techniques. One of them is the traditional way of contrasting two or more languages. In this way, linguists tend to study every feature of a language on its own, and then compare it with its parallel feature in the other language.

Another technique of making a contrastive analysis between languages is the one which most linguists adopt. They make use of translation as a means of establishing cross-linguistic relationship, that is, the contrastive analysis will be between the original text and its translation language. The reason behind choosing translation to be used in the contrastive analysis is the fact that translation is not a matter of 1:1 correspondence, but *"one structure may have several corresponding structures in the target language, or that certain elements of the mother tongue may have several corresponding counterparts in the target language whatsoever"* (Vintar, 2002).

In this way, a kind of multilingual data will be in hand, with a lot of the features of the two

languages that can be identified easily. This is instead of choosing a feature in one language and searching for its equivalent which may not exist in the other language, especially on the syntactic level.

A further technique is the one confined to the use of the computer. The computer corpora means *"a collection of texts in machine-readable form"* (Johansson, 2000).

The basis of this way is to use a multilingual corpora, and can be applied on various levels such as grammar, lexicon, discourse analysis, etc., for the purpose of making a contrastive analysis. The benefits of using a computer corpora can be seen in:

- 1- *"They give new insights into the languages compared – insights that are likely to be unnoticed in studies of monolingual corpora.*
- 2- *They can be used for a range of comparative purposes and increase our understanding of language-specific, typology, and cultural differences, as well as of universal features.*
- 3- *They illuminate differences between source texts and translations, and between native and non-native texts.*

4- *They can be used for a number of practical applications, e.g. in lexicography, language teaching and translation"* (Johansson, 2000).

An interesting idea is that not only the computational techniques are valuable in analyzing learners' errors, but also in developing the study of translation. *"A growing number of scholars in translation studies have begun to seriously consider the corpus-based approach as a viable and fruitful perspective within which translation, and translating can be studied in a novel and systematic way. A study of translated texts may focus of features included by the source language on more general characteristics of translated texts"*. (Johansson, 2000).

6- Donald's Concept of Error Correction:

Away from all the theoretical studies done by linguists and researchers, whether resulting from the Error Analysis hypothesis or the Contrastive Analysis hypothesis, is the one stated by Rolf Donald from the Eastbourne School of English. The purpose behind presenting his view is that since he is a teacher, his experience is derived from the time spent in observing learners' errors, and searching for the suitable way to correct and eliminate them.

So the ideas he suggests seem, in a way or another, closer to teachers' thoughts more than the theoretical perspectives offered by linguists. In his paper titled: Error Correction I, he describes error correction as being an individual's reaction to a student's piece of writing or utterance. The following lines will explain his views concerning learners' errors.

1- Attitudes Towards Error Correction:

Donald sees that the attitudes towards the concept of error correction vary among teachers and learners as well. On the part of teachers, they may be influenced by the following factors.

- 1- If English is their second language, then "*great emphasis was placed on correctness at their teacher training college*". (Donald, 1, 2002).
- 2- If English is their native language, then they will face the fact that they have never used to worry about their language.
- 3- A particular approach or methodology they used to follow in considering the concept of error and its reason.

On the other hand, students may be influenced by the approach or strategy they use in learning, in the sense that some students fear to take the risk of writing unless they are sure to be correct. Actually, *"Some students take an eternity to produce a piece of writing as they are constantly rubbing out what they have written while at the opposite extreme the writing is done as fast as possible without any planning or editing"* (Donald, 1, 2002). Also, learners may develop a negative attitude towards writing because their teacher corrects all their errors. Or if she corrects few errors, they might feel that she has not spent sufficient time looking at their works.

2- Categorization of Errors:

Donald categorizes errors on two levels:

a- According to the reason of its production:

- "1- It is the result of a random guess (pre-systematic).*
- 2- It was produced while testing out hypotheses (systematic).*

3- *It is a slip of the tongue, a lapse, a mistake (caused by carelessness, fatigue, etc.) (post-systematic)". (Donald, 1, 2002).*

b- According to the linguistic type:

"1- A lexical error – vocabulary.

2- A phonological error – pronunciation.

3- A syntactic error – grammar.

4- An interpretive error – misunderstanding of a speaker's intention or meaning.

5- A pragmatic error – failure to apply the rules of conversation". (Donald, 1, 2002).

3- A Model of Correcting Writing:

Donald suggests a way for correcting written works through certain questions the teacher has to answer.

1. As far as comprehensibility is concerned, teachers should focus on the following points:

"a- Can you understand the output?

b- Are these areas of incoherence?

c- Do these affect the overall message?

d- Does communication break down?" (Donald, 1, 2002).

2. Attention should be paid to fulfilling the requirements of the task: *"Has the student addressed the task?" (Donald, 1, 2002).*

3. On the level of syntax and lexis:

a- Are they appropriate to the task?

b- Are they accurate?" (Donald 1, 2002).

4- Practical Techniques/Ideas for Correcting Writing:

The techniques he proposes are divided into two parts:

1. Training students to correct their errors: this way helps students recognize their errors and correct them through playing specific kinds of games during the lesson:

"a- Grammar auctions: students receive a number of sentences taken from their written work. Some are correct, some wrong. Students in groups have to try to buy the correct ones in the auction. They

have a limited amount of money. The team with the correct sentences wins.

b- Mistakes mazes: students have a list of sentences. Their route through a maze depends on whether the sentences are right or wrong. They follow white arrows for correct sentences and black arrows for incorrect ones. If they have identified all the sentences correctly they escape, if not they have to retrace their steps and find out where they were wrong". (Donald, 1, 2002).

5. Ways for Correcting Errors by the Teacher:

a- Teachers can use a different color pen to underline certain sentences that have appropriate language, so that he can offer them as useful samples for student.

b- Also, they can correct errors by writing the correct forms in the same places where errors exist.

c- By using the margin, the teacher can write codes to identify the type of error, whether voc for lexical errors, or sync for syntactic. So when the student reviews his work, he can recognize his errors and may try to correct them.

d- Another method is to put crosses on the margin to indicate the number of errors found in each line. In the same previous way, the student should identify his errors and attempt to make corrections.

e- Divide students into groups, then let each group correct the works of the other by following any of the above techniques.

f- The teacher should, from time to time, give his instructions about the frequent errors found in students' works, and how to eliminate them.

6. Solution for Avoiding Errors:

Donald indicates the role of planning in eliminating many of the following problems:

"1. Inappropriate layout.

2. No paragraphs.

3. Lack of cohesion.

4. Inappropriate style". (Donald, 1, 2002).

Also he suggests some questions that help in putting the plan of writing:

"1. What am I going to write? (An informal letter ..., etc).

2. *What layout do I need?*
3. *What information am I going to include?*
4. *How many paragraphs do I need?*
5. *What grammar/vocabulary am I going to use?*
6. *What linking words (because, and, etc) am I going to use?"* (Donald, 1, 2002).

7- The Deviation and Permeation Factors:

Howells, in his paper Contrastive Analysis Revisited: A Participative Approach to Improving Language Performance (2003), tries to reveal some factors that lie between the two basic theories used for analyzing students' errors, that is; the Error Analysis theory and the Contrastive Analysis theory. The two factors he postulates are related to the concept of deviation and the concept of permeation.

Linguists should be interested not only in the type of error or its source, but also in its seriousness and the degree of disturbance which they cause to the process of communication and norms. Some kinds of errors are serious to the extent that they divert the reader from making a direct connection between utterance and meaning. In the case of

foreign language learners, the ability to write a high quality paper is not easy; there must be errors. However, it is better for teachers to judge the written work by the quality and the efficiency of its message than by the quantity of the errors found. The degree of deviation is subject to the relationship between the sentence and its content:

1. The sentence may be correct, but its use is ambiguous to divert the meaning from understanding to the opposite meaning.
2. The level of deviation increases because of the resonance which certain types of errors have to the understanding of the native speaker.

There are other types of deviation that result from the combination of error and context:

"1. Variant of meaning leading to inaccurate or embarrassing interpretation.

2. Indecipherability, where comprehension comes to a dead stop because a phrase is just not interpretable, e.g.: I am walking on the upside of the street.

3. *Familiarity: where the learner produces the cliché errors associated with his mother tongue, E.G.: Do you can see that man?*

4. *Inappropriacy, be it at the level of socio-linguistic or collocation: Please, I am looking for your man (husband)."* (Howells, 2003).

On the other hand, there is the concept of permeation which means the permeation of one type of error into another. The non-standard pronunciation leads to non-standard spelling. The following example explains this idea: "*a teacher of EFL in Britain was responsible for a group of Saudi Arabian students and received a telephone call from the worried father of one of them, asking how his son was, as the family received no news of him. Having assured the parents the son was well, the teacher asked the latter why he had not written. 'Oh, but I have written every week,' was the reply. 'Where do you put the letters?' asked the teacher. 'In this box here, marked 'LITTER' The /e/ sound in Arabic is more closed than the English equivalent and his student was hearing a sound similar /li/. It is not surprising then, that he should relate his perception of what he had heard to what he read on the box marked 'LITTER'"* (Howells, 2003). This indicates that there is a relationship between the

receptive area and the productive area of the learner.

8- Solutions for Learners' Errors:

It is not enough to study the errors that learners commit during the process of learning, rather there should be solutions for correcting these errors, and even for avoiding committing them. Otherwise, studying language will be insufficient and the problems of learning will not be eliminated.

1. Error Correction and Motivation:

When searching for ways of correcting errors, it becomes important to see the relationship between error correction and motivation, that is *"the possible effects that may have on students' motivation and willingness to take risks"*. (Howells, 2003). The factors that should be considered in this field are:

"I- At what level of error does the teacher correct?"

II- What methodology should be used to correct?" (Howells, 2003).

The reason behind concentrating on this relationship is that there are degrees of correctness of the part of the various attitudes and purposes

which learners have in different countries. *"In Anglophone countries that have adopted the US-inspired student-centered culture that advocates fluency over accuracy, teachers are reluctant to adopt a consistent scheme of error identification and correction based on a knowledge of standard grammar. This reluctance is due in part to the doctrine of 'communicative ability' and partly to the fact that the younger generation of teachers was itself trained during a period of decreased emphasis on grammar ... English second language students are in a different situation from that of American students. In a study on students' preferences for error correction in spoken English, English second language students very much wanted to be corrected."* (Howells, 2003).

Another point is derived from an experiment made by a teacher on the purpose of demonstrating the effect of correcting errors on students. The teacher tends to correct every single error in the papers of her students, also having in mind the desire *"to find a medium between the extreme action of that teacher and the laissez-faire activities of those who allow errors to become fossilized, permanent markers of the non-native speaker's English"*. (Howells, 2003). The result shows that *"extensive practice in developing communicating*

strategies in the early stages of second language learning will lead students to acquire permanent and irreversible errors in their interlanguage". (Howells, 2003).¹

2. Levels of Correctness:

It is necessary to note that levels of correctness should also be varied according to learners. In other words, beginners will produce eliminatory errors, but when they move to higher stages, many of these eliminatory errors will be eliminated and the remaining will be of a fossilizable nature. What is difficult to deal with is the kind of errors produced by advanced learners, since the explanation of the sources of errors needs more efforts on the part of the teacher. *"Advanced learners will also be more adventurous in their production and will run into problems in areas such as collocation that are difficult for the teacher to explain and the learner to remember. As an example: why do we say 'a piece of timber' but not 'an item of timber'? When does the noun 'timber' become countable? How big does a piece of wood have to be before it becomes 'a timber'?"* (Howells, 2003).

3. The Suggested Solutions:

Linguists differ in the solutions they suggest for correcting errors. Corder (1973) believes the idea of making a comparison with the reconstructed form in the native language of the learner may be useful. Also he sees that linguists should do their best to make the learning materials meet the needs of learners.

Another solution is through concentrating on a certain type of error and giving the suitable instruction, till students overcome the reason that leads them to commit this kind of error.

A further way to correct errors and eliminate them is confined to the use of the computer. Since computers are available on a wide range nowadays, it is possible to benefit from this technology in finding a way to improve learners' skills of writing and consequently avoid committing errors. The solution suggested by some linguists basically *"describes an attempt to involve the computer as an aid in the process of pre-identifying errors in the improvement of written work"* (Howells, 2003).

The reasons behind using the computer lie in:

1. *"The increased sophistication of word processing programmes.*
2. *Increased access to the Internet, with its almost infinite supply of knowledge"* (Howells, 2003).

The emphasis in the use of the computer will be on the Word processor facility. The process of this technique involves three steps:

- 1- Registering possible errors which the student may commit.
- 2- Compiling a classified item bank of the learners' problem areas.
- 3- The use of this item bank as a reference work for future error avoidance.

The following lines include an explanation of each of the three steps:

The pre-production phase of writing: planning to avoid errors:

In the writing lessons, students are taught to develop a planning skill for what they are going to write. The problem that faces students here is that during the process of writing, they deviate from the plan which they have set. This is because while

developing the content, they concentrate on the linguistic aspect and forget the original plan which they have put before they start writing. The solution lies in the facilities of Word processor, which help the learner by referring to his plan and arranging the headings in order of priority. The plan is divided into main headings. Then, these headings are divided into subheadings.

The instructions of the system are as follows:

- "1. Select (highlight) the relevant sub-heading.*
- 2. Put the mouse cursor on the triangle in the "Style" box of the Format Toolbar (this box is usually at the top left of the "word" screen, and probably contains the word "Normal", a menu drops down to show various boxes, including 'Heading 1', "Heading 2" etc.*
- 3. Click on the desired level of heading and the sub-heading in the text will assume that level of priority in the text.*

To view the headings only:

- 1. Click on 'View Page Layout', a new toolbar appears, on which is a series of numbers.*

2. Click on number 3 (assuming you have three levels of priority). The titles selected are now visible, arranged to show main sections and sub-sections. If you have written the paragraphs to go with the headings and move the headings in 'Page Layout', the text will moved with the heading". (Howells, 2003).

B- The Production Phase – Checking Work:

The Word processor has the facility of correcting spelling errors, grammatical errors, and error patterns such as double letters group. This is done by the 'Autocorrect' which is found in the 'Tools' menu. This way is useful, since it will show the learner his error and its correction. But students should not depend in their writing on this facility to correct their errors because they will not learn from their mistakes. It is better for the learner to write down the errors that the Word indicates on a special note in order to avoid making them in the future. The benefit of this technique is in helping the learners make a linguistic self-analysis before or while they are writing.

"The Word processor permits a system of 'language data-banking' ... that provides the writer with a personalized cumulative reference system

related to the frequency of problems she has experienced with particular items of vocabulary or grammar". (Howells, 2003).

Applying this Word processor method on students' writings will enable them to make files of errors classified according to their types such as: lexical errors, grammatical errors, errors of discourse analysis etc. Then, *"By using the 'Sort' facility in the Word processor, the frequency with which the same word or structure is occurring can be calculated. Where a learner has had difficulty in formulating expressions in previous pieces of writing, the original problem phrase (error) and a more suitable form (correction) may be collected in a reference file which can be made available as new work is written. The student may then either switch windows to access the reference file when it is needed, or may copy a selection of anticipated phrases to the top of the new essay, so that they may be used as necessary."* (Howells, 2003).

C- Methods of Individual Error Analysis: The Identification of Linguistic Problem Areas:

The concept which can be derived from the above mentioned procedures is the correction banking, where the learner collects his own most

common errors, in such a way that he will be able to retrieve that information during the process of writing. The traditional way of analyzing errors depends on collecting instances of errors from learners' writings, and pointing out the problems that cause their occurrence. However, it is not important for the learner to know the number of errors found in his writing but how to eradicate these errors. The Word processor offers the following system:

- "1. First draft of original text written, spell-checked, saved to disc and printed in draft on the reverse side of once-used paper.*
- 2. Teacher indicates, without correcting, erroneous phrases.*
- 3. Student returns to original file, attempts to correct errors, saves new document and prints a fair copy.*
- 4. Final draft of text is corrected by teacher and first and second correction process discussed with student.*
- 5. Student returns to original file on Word processor and carries out the following actions:*

a- Creates a two-column table at the foot of the document, one headed Error, the other Correction.

b- Selects erroneous phrase together with as many of the surrounding words as give a meaningful context.

c- Types at the beginning of the selection a code (i.e .v/ for verb errors, pro/for prepositions, voc/for vocabulary, etc).

d- Copies the selection to both cells in the column at the foot of the document.

e- Changes the phrase in the correction column to an acceptable version.

f- Performs a 'Sort' on the columns which (after sorting, the codes may be deleted by using the replace command – e.g. 'Replace v/with ... leaving the 'with' box blank).

g- With cut and paste, the two columns are transferred to a master file of errors compiled from other pieces of writing and by using sort again, the groups of errors are inserted into the general classifications of Verbs, Prepositions, Spelling, Vocabulary, etc." (Howells, 2003).

The advantage of this system is clear on the part of the teacher and the learner at the same time. As for the learner, he will be able to form a reference for future uses, through composing his own files of errors, classified according to the various language aspects, and arranged in alphabetical order with their corresponding contexts. This reference will show the kind of error in which he encounters more problems. *"A further refinement to the method is for the learners to create a new master error file every term, in order to be able to observe changes in their error profile"*. (Howells, 2003). On the other hand, the teacher will be able to figure out the difficulties easily and give the suitable instructions.

To make it easier for the teacher and the student, it is better to limit the length of the written work by restricting the number of words that should be written. The teacher can analyze learners' writings depending on the technique he prefers. That is, he can follow the Error Analysis theory or the Contrastive Analysis theory and identify the sources of errors, whether they are the result of mother tongue interference, or because of certain features of the target language and so on. This analysis can be applied on several levels such as the lexical, grammatical, syntactical, and contextual,

taking into consideration the social and cultural factors.

By the use of the computer corpora, the teacher will make his analysis easily in order to find the best possible devices for developing teaching methods and for avoiding committing errors.

A valuable feature of the word processor is in the so called 'Autotext'. *"If we take as an example a learner with difficulties in the present perfect, he can create a document with the basic rules for using this tense, and collect examples taken from: corrections in previous essays, dictionaries or grammar books, examples taken from a concordancing programme, and store them as an Autotext entry. If while writing the learner needs to refer to information on the structure, simply typing the code word (e.g. have) will produce the stored examples".* (Howells, 2003).

Since vocabulary acquisition has to be included in the scope of error analysis, the Word processor presents a new solution to the problem of collocation and suitability of vocabulary to context. In many cases, students are taught vocabulary through parroting lists of words arranged alphabetically and isolated from their contexts. In

fact, not all learners have the ability to memorize hundreds of words, and even if they keep in mind some of them, they will face difficulties when using them in contexts, and consequently unsuitable sentences will be generated.

"The learner has two needs in relation to vocabulary acquisition; a productive need and a receptive one:

- 1. To be able to find the most appropriate word or phrase to express a meaning (productive).*
- 2. To be able to relate received utterances to the stock of vocabulary he has already acquired (receptive)." (Howells, 2003).*

The problem of vocabulary increases with the large number of items, so it will be difficult for the learner to build a mental database for vocabulary without having a written record.

Word processor offers a facility where "new items can be collected along with their contexts and put into alphabetical order with the Sort facility for easy retrieval. New contexts can be copied into the reference, as well as notes on usage and common problems associated with the item. In other words, just as the learner can create an individual error

list, so a personalized mini-dictionary can be compiled containing only the words the individual needs". (Howells, 2003).

An example of how to use this technique can be expressed through the steps that an Arab student who learns English as a foreign language can follow to acquire vocabulary.

1. A column grid is to be created.
2. English vocabularies with their contexts and notes about their appropriate uses are entered in the first column, and their equivalents in the Arabic language are written in the second column.
3. First column is sorted into alphabetical order.
4. Saving file as 'Engara. Doc'.
5. The file is copied into another document, sorted by the second column which contains the Arabic equivalents, and then the file is saved as "Araeng doc".
6. Files can be printed with the English or the Arabic columns deleted for the purpose of self-testing by attempting to fill the blanks in the third and fourth columns".

A further development in language work is that of "small-scale concordancing programmes". Oxford University Press and Longman have both published such programmes, which are available with English Language corpora. The programmes offer the facility of producing a screen filled with lists of examples of the use of a certain word chosen by the operator. So if we are teaching 'should and ought' we can enter both words at once into our search and receive a list of examples printed. If we teach other languages, we have to find a source text for our corpus and save it into the programme.

A Critical Viewpoint:

As it is stated at the beginning of this research, the reason behind browsing all the above proposed techniques of analyzing learners' errors is to achieve a better understanding of the frequent difficulties that students face in the process of learning a second or a foreign language, particularly, in developing writing skills. These techniques may reveal the reliability of the teaching materials, as well as the effectiveness of the teaching methods. So, our aim is to provide learners with the suitable devices to improve their performance in the target language.

To conclude all what is said about the concept of analyzing learners' errors, it is clear that this idea has been far from being accepted before 1960s, and rather undesired. After this date, views have changed, in the sense that linguists became interested in studying the errors produced by learners and considered them systematic. The studies are made on the basis of the contrastive analysis between the mother tongue of the learner and the target language, considering the mother tongue interference to be the major source of errors. The discussion about these errors has witnessed a radical development with the statement of the Error Analysis hypothesis, which focused not only on the mother tongue interference, but also on several factors such as social, psychological, and others factors. Linguists start postulating various techniques to apply this hypothesis. The Error Analysis theory is still used by many linguists despite the evolution of contrastive linguistics with its new interests such as the pragmatic and textual factors, and the modern techniques it proposes to make an analysis of learners' error.



Chapter Two

1- Sources of Errors:

Generally speaking, linguists who adopt the Error Analysis hypothesis share the same following points concerning the sources of errors:

- A- Mother tongue interference or language transfer, where the habits and rules of the native language of the learner interfere and prevent him from acquiring the rules of the target language. This factor can be seen clearly on the semantic level, when the learner tries to realize in the target language the semantic features of his message in the same way as in his native language.
- B- Some kinds of errors result from the nature of the written samples collected to be the data for the analysis.
- C- Since the learning process extends over time, some errors may result from of the partial knowledge which students have of the target language.

D- The element of choice is considered one of the sources of errors. In this case the learner faces difficulties in categories where choices exist only in the target language and not in his native language.

E- Overgeneralization of the rules of the target language is considered a source of learners' errors. This factor also includes:

- 1- Ignorance of rule restrictions.
- 2- Incomplete application of rules.
- 3- False concepts.

F- Another source of errors is related to the nature (psychology) of the learner and the learning strategy he adopts.

G- There are certain skills of the target language, whether they are lexical or grammatical, that are inherently difficult to learn. Items of this kind generate errors because they turn to be fossilizable and consequently the learner can not master them. This factor is described by linguists as consisting of features related to the nature of the target language.

H- Transfer of training or the teaching strategies is responsible for some of learners' errors.

- I. Other factors that cause learners to commit errors are related to age, social and background factors, modality, intelligence, and maturity.

The difference between the techniques proposed by the Error Analysis hypothesis and the contrastive linguistics on this level of study lies in the fact that the latter considers the mother tongue interference or language transfer to be the main source of errors, and depending on this principle they develop the various ways to analyze the written works. Whereas the former takes all the above mentioned sources when any analysis is to be made.

2. The Models of Analysis:

The major steps for any model of error analysis are the following:

- 1- Data collection.
- 2- Description of errors.
- 3- Explanation of errors.

Linguists agree on the previous mentioned steps, and also on the conditions that should be considered in collecting the data which are represented by:

- 1- The size of the sample.
- 2- The medium to be sampled.
- 3- The homogeneity of the sample taking into account the learners' characteristics such as age, stage of development and motivation.

The points of difference between researchers arise from the techniques they adopt for describing and explaining errors:

- 1- People who adopt the Error Analysis hypothesis develop techniques that depend on describing and explaining errors found in the written work in relation to the reconstructed text or sentences in the target language. However, within this stage there are also other differences because:

- a. Some researchers are interested in the semantic aspect of language, as with Kardaleska.

- b. Others are concerned with the social and cognitive aspects, like Myles.
- c. Whereas there are people who prefer to focus on the grammatical and lexical aspects, such as Harste and Blakesley.

In this respect, it can be said that each of Corder's model of analysis, which depends on dividing the description of errors into superficial and deep, taking into consideration the linguistic element as well as the psychological and social elements, and Ellis' model seem useful and sufficient techniques to be applied. In addition to that, the two linguists share many similar points in their suggestions.

As for the computational errors systems (The French Grammar Analyser, the XTRA-TE system, Menezel's approach, the ILTS system, The VP2 system, and The ALICE system) they all differ in their ways of treating errors, despite the possibility of each of them to be applied on various language aspects. The difficulty in all these systems lies in the role the teacher has to play in inputting the information to the computer. The technique we sought should remove as much as possible the

burden of correcting kinds of errors, and even without getting the teacher involved in great work of inserting information. Such a way will be useful for the teacher to focus on other issues of learning, and for the learner to correct his errors.

2. On the other hand, linguists who adopt the Contrastive Analysis hypothesis tend to describe and explain errors depending on a previous contrastive study they make between the native language of the learner and the target language. This study takes into consideration all language aspects. Also researchers differ in the techniques they use for making a contrastive analysis:

- a- Some follow the traditional way of choosing a feature in the target language and searching for its equivalent in the native language of the learner.
- b- Others prefer to use translation in order to collect as many features of the two languages as possible.
- c- While another group focuses on the use of the computer corpora in making the contrastive analysis.

The following is an explanation of the way a text is analyzed in the case of adopting the Error Analysis hypothesis: The analyst tends to collect the written samples, taking into consideration all the conditions required. Then, he will describe the errors in terms of overt and covert, and identify the errors and ignore the mistakes. After that, he will explain the errors of the learner on the lexical aspect, the grammatical aspect, and the contextual aspect, etc, .. taking into account the various sources of errors. At the end he will be able to achieve a better understanding of the difficulties that learners face by evaluating the quality and seriousness of errors.

On the other hand, linguists who adopt the contrastive analysis will first make a contrastive study between the mother tongue of the learner and the target language, in order to predict the similarities and differences between them. Then, samples of written works are collected under the shared conditions. Also, errors are described overtly and covertly. When it comes to the explanation of errors, the lexical, the grammatical, the textual and the pragmatic factors will be considered. What differs is the contrastive study that has been made before, and which will inevitably provide the analyst with more explanation of the errors he will

encounter. This way of analysis is extremely useful for teachers so much, especially for those who teach English as a foreign language because they will be able to identify the errors easily depending on this contrastive study, and consequently will be able to figure out the difficulties and give their instructions.

Although all the previous ways of analysis seem useful in pursue of understanding the problems that arise during the process of learning, they still seem traditional and not practical enough to be applied by teachers. Furthermore, there are languages that have not been studied widely in order to achieve the sought after aim. In the case of our research, there are not so many contrastive studies that have been made between the Arabic language and the English language. That is why a lot of problems face teachers when dealing with errors.

3. The Suggested Solutions:

This level of study shows points of difference between linguists. However, the solutions suggested still show difficulty to be applied completely.

The model of analysis we suggest, will hopefully, be easy and practical for any teacher to apply on his students. At the same time, it provides a solution to eliminate learners' errors in the various aspects of language. It is the one stated by Howells, with some modifications, through using the Microsoft Office technology. The reasons why we choose to support this technique can be summed up in the following points:

1. It is easy and students may like it and even practice it at home.
2. The use of this way removes the psychological factor that makes students fear to take the risk of putting words on paper. This is because when the learner commits errors, either he will be able to correct them himself or the teacher can provide him alone with the suitable instructions.
3. Many of the lexical, grammatical, and textual errors will be identified by the system, so the teacher will have only to concentrate on the content of the work.
4. The same applies to students who, by getting used to this technology, will be

able to discover ways to overcome difficulties in writing, concerning spelling and grammatical rules, for the purpose of giving more interest to the information they have to write.

The application of this model will be on Arab learners. It is divided into three basic phases: the pre-production phase or drafting, which is concerned with the planning to avoid errors, the production phase or writing and the phase of individual error analysis and identification of linguistic problems.

The following steps will explain the application of this technique on a single student using composition as a kind of writing:

1. The student is given a topic to write about.
2. He is asked to limit his writing to a restricted number of words for the purpose of making the analysis easier.
3. The first thing the student has to do is to write his plan on the document. He will need to classify his ideas into headings and subheadings on different lines.

Then, by using the 'style' box which is also found in the format toolbar, he can highlight the headings in a certain style and the subheading in another. After that, he will be able to see the layout of his work by using the facility 'page layout' found in the format toolbar. The purpose of this procedure is to help the student review the steps of his plan as he is writing, since it will appear at the right side of the page, and consequently eliminate the possibility of deviating from the main topic.

4. After finishing writing, the learner is asked to revise his work, and make a spelling and grammatical check, using the 'Autocorrect' facility which is found in the tools menu. The 'Autocorrect' will highlight the spelling and some grammatical errors and suggest corrections. So the student, by using this facility, will be able to recognize his errors and correct them himself. This way is useful only if the student gets benefit of his errors. So he has to open a new document and write the words and phrases which he has committed errors

in, classifying them into spelling errors and grammatical errors. Then by using the 'Sort' facility found in the table toolbar he can arrange these errors alphabetically. The new document will be saved as for a future reference. Unless this reference is created, the student will get accustomed to the 'Autocorrect' facility and will not be able to recognize and overcome the points of weakness in his writing. Furthermore, this way of correcting errors helps teachers because they will not need to look for such kinds of spelling and grammatical errors which may increase especially with beginners.

5. Then, the learner is asked to revise his work once again after correcting the spelling and some grammatical errors, but with more concentration on the content. Then he has to save the document of his work with a name such as 'doc1'.
6. The teacher will read this 'doc1' and indicate the erroneous phrases without correcting them.

7. After that, the student returns to his document and sees the errors identified, and attempts to correct them. When he finishes he saves the document with a new name such as 'doc 2'.
8. Later on, the teacher will return to 'doc1' and correct the errors highlighted before. The correction can be provided with some explanations about the type of error and its source.
9. Then, the student is asked to make a comparison between 'doc1' which is corrected by the teacher and 'doc2' which he has corrected, in order to see the points which he has problems in. At this stage, the teacher will be able to gather information about the difficulties that the student has and give his instructions.
10. To learn from the errors, the student has to open a new document and save it as 'ref', so that he can return to it when needed. The document is organized as follows.

- a- A three-column table is created and named 'lexcial'. The learner will put the erroneous words and phrases in the first column. Then, the correct ones are written in the second column. In the third, he will add the suitable contexts for each of the words and phrases mentioned. This table is different from the one created before for spelling errors, since it is restricted to errors related to textual and context problems. On the other hand, the teacher has to explain the sources of errors such as mother tongue interference, or certain features of the target language, and suggest the suitable solutions. Later on, when the student wants to write and faces a difficulty in choosing a word or phrase, he can retrieve the information stored in this table and make use of them.
- b- Another four-column table is created and named grammar. Similar to the above procedures, in the first column he will put the erroneous phrase, and in the second, the source of the error. In the third, he will add the correct form,

and in the fourth column he will write the suitable grammatical rule. This table is especially for grammar to help the learner identify the grammatical rules that he faces difficulties in. The rules may be provided either by the teacher or even from a grammar book. This table may be joined with a previous one created when the student has made the spelling and grammatical check. If, for instance, the learner has problems in the past tense, he can put in this table all the possible rules of this tense with the correct examples, so that he can review them whenever he wants to use this tense in future writings. The role of the teacher is important here because he has to provide the student with the sources of his grammatical errors, such as overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restriction, or incomplete application of rules.

- c- A further table is made to use for errors related to the learner's strategy of thinking and arranging ideas, besides some notes about the content and the

way sentences are connected to give the sought after meaning.

- d- Errors related to punctuation may be collected in a separate column, where the student can write an explanation about the use of each kind of the punctuation marks, so that he will remember to put them in the correct place in his writing.

The previously mentioned tables can be gathered in one document or in separate ones. This way of arranging ideas is called 'correction banking', where the student will find assistance in the various aspects of language. The benefits of this technique may be seen when the student gets used to it. Since writing skills can be developed in practice, the learner who applies the above steps will be able to overcome many of the difficulties he encounters during writing, which would consequently create a positive attitude towards writing.

In the case of translating, the following steps will explain the model of analyzing and correcting errors, translating an English language text into Arabic:

1. The student is given an English language text to translate into the Arabic language (which is the mother tongue of the learner).

2. After finishing translating, he is asked to make a spelling and grammatical check using the 'Autocorrect' facility. The student has to open a new document and write the words which he has problems in their spelling. Then, he revises his work to make sure that he has finished completely. This document is saved under the name 'doc1'.

3. The teacher reads the translated text in 'doc1' and identify the errors without correcting them.

4. Then, the student returns to 'doc1' and tries to correct the errors highlighted by the teacher. After that, he saves the document as 'doc2'.

5. The teacher corrects the errors in 'doc1'.

6. A comparison is made between the two documents, so the student can recognize his errors, their sources and the suitable corrections.

7. Depending on the instructions given by the teacher, the student has to open a new document and save it as 'ref'. This document will include the following tables:

- a. A column of five tables is created and named lexical. The student writes in the first column the word or the phrase in English, and in the second the erroneous translation. In the third, he will put the correct translation in Arabic, and in the fourth, the suitable context. In the fifth column, he can provide some explanation about the sources of the errors. It is the role of the teacher at this point to give his instructions about the reasons behind committing such errors like mother tongue interference and cultural differences. This table helps the student in the acquisition of vocabulary because it will be difficult for him to memorize lots of words and phrases isolated from their contexts. So, when he wants to translate in the future, he can retrieve this table which may also be named 'item banking', and see the correct context of each of the existing words and phrases.
- b- Another table is made under the name grammar, in which the learner will put the grammatical errors, their correction, and the suitable rules. This table is similar to the one mentioned above.

- c- A further table is created for punctuation marks.

Such tables can be used not only as references for the learner during his writing, but also, as he moves to higher stages in the learning process, he can edit these tables in a way to observe his level of progress concerning the types of errors which he has overcome.

There is no doubt that the modern technology available these days is reliable enough to be used in learning. The aim is to find a methodology that combines the traditional ways of analyzing learners' writings and developing language skills with the facilities which the modern technology provides, and all this will be for the purpose of improving the learning process.

4- The Internet:

In addition to the facilities which Microsoft Office presents concerning analyzing and correcting learners' errors, there is still a more interesting technology which is the international network of the "internet". This world wide web modern technology provides a great source of knowledge, and connects people all over the world. Some of the benefits of using this technology are:

1. Because of the large number of professional software that will be available on the international network, learners will be able to find many suitable sources to improve their skills in the target language, by using the 'search engine' facility.
2. Also learners can communicate with native speakers of the language they want to learn, through the 'chatting' facility, of the 'messenger,' and so the problem of not having the opportunity to interact and work with target language native speakers will be eliminated.
3. Another feature is related to the teacher who will stay up to date with the developed techniques, devices, theories, and learning materials used in teaching language.
4. By using the technology of electronic mail (email), students will not be restricted to a certain time to practice writing skill; rather they can do this at home, and even at any time they want. Then, they send their works by 'email' to be corrected by teachers.

5. The use of the Internet eradicates embarrassment, in the sense that, students enjoy the anonymity of internet instruction, as they do not feel bad about asking what they may consider silly questions.

One of software offered by training courses on the internet is by getting the student involved in a problem-solving situation through audio/video players, and the learner has to provide the correct expressions in each situation. For example, the student is exposed to an airport environment, and the sentences he has to use are related to traveling passengers, cargo, planes etc. The learner will face questions, and he has to answer them. If the answer is correct, he will move to a further stage or even to a further situation. This software is useful in different aspects:

1. It increases the learner's vocabulary since they are presented in context.
2. New expressions related to certain occasions will be learned.
3. This idea is applicable to both types of learner's production, speaking and writing. Because on the aspect of speaking, he will be able to provide a

comprehensible message to the audience (listeners), and on the writing aspect, when he is asked to write on similar topics, he will be able to use the right phrases and convey the desired meaning. This is instead of passing by information indirectly because of lack of suitable expressions.

Actually we support the use of the Internet in learning, because the easier the teaching strategies and materials become, the more the opportunities will be for teachers to make new researches, and develop their performance for the benefit of learners and learning.

The theories and techniques presented indicate linguists' interest in studying language deeply, and at the same time they prove the important role that language plays in real life and between people.

The factors of mother tongue interference and cultural difference have been referred to at some points in this chapter, but they will be studied in detail in the following chapter.

Conclusion:

Finally, the ultimate goal of English language teaching is to develop the learners' communicative competence which will enable them to communicate successfully in the real world, especially in writing which is the focus of this research. Also, communicating successfully means to pass on a comprehensible message to the audience. So, it is our duty to search for the best methods, using the modern technology available these days, to achieve this communicative competence.

For English foreign language learners, the only way to improve their writing is to keep writing, thinking that with enough practice in writing and revision, they would eventually acquire the fundamentals, or at least the standards required for writing.

We must accept the fact that second language writing contains errors. Indeed, second language writers require and expect specific overt feedback from teachers not only on content, but also on the form and structure of writing. If this feedback is not part of the instructional process, then students will be disadvantaged in improving both writing and

language skills. We need to understand how students compose in both their native languages and in English to understand more about their strategies (especially in monitoring errors), the role of translation, and transfer of skills.

We end our discussion about analyzing learners' errors with the following words by Cook:

"L2 users' knowledge of a second language is not the same as that of native speakers even at advanced levels. Trying to get students to be like native speakers is ineffective, their minds and their knowledge of language will inevitably be different. The benefits of learning a second language are becoming a different kind of person, not just adding another language. The main obstacle to setting the successful L2 user as the goal is the belief that the native speakers speak the true form of English. This implies the comparison of one group with another, the language of non-natives has always to be compared with that of natives; anything that deviates is wrong". (Cook, 1999).

Chapter Three

Cultural Differences and Mother Tongue Interference

1. What is the Meaning of 'mother tongue'?

Linguists use the term 'mother tongue' to refer to the first language, which any person acquires since childhood. It is through the mother tongue or first language that the background knowledge of the world, attitudes, and thoughts are created and performed. Consequently, it will have significant effects on any other language that will be learned after it.

2. Reasons to Resort to Mother Tongue

"When confronted with something new, whether it is a new food, a different kind of music, or just new information, it is a natural instinct to look for similarities with things that are familiar, to try to draw some comparison with what we know already. Consciously, or unconsciously, we bring what we know to what we do not, making it

impossible to learn anything entirely from scratch". (Nicholls, 2002).

The above description applies to English language learning. This is because learning another language encompasses everything that learners hear and see in the new language. *"It may include a wide variety of situations such as exchanges in restaurants and stores, conversations with friends, reading street signs and newspapers, as well as classroom activities, or it may be spare, including only language classroom activities and a few books".* (Bhela, 1999).

Theoretically speaking, English language learning is supposed to start from a zero point or close to it. Then, an accumulation of mastered entities amasses them in quantities sufficient to constitute a particular level of proficiency. In reality, this is not the case. Although during the process of learning, an accumulation of English items is created, learners face difficulties in organizing the resulting knowledge into appropriate coherent structures. Consequently, when communicating in English, whether verbally or nonverbally, learners tend to rely on their mother tongue to find similarities, to produce responses. To give an example, in the early stages, and in

countries which consider English as a foreign language, learning may depend on textbooks, explanations which are, in many cases, in the students' mother tongue, and the consultation of a bilingual dictionary. All these factors lead students, out of necessity, to rely to a certain extent on their mother tongue, for the purpose of finding similarities to achieve coherence in English.

The reliance includes searching for equivalents in the mother tongue to express meaning in English. Linguists usually use the term transfer to refer to the influence of the mother tongue on English. The transfer is of two kinds: a positive transfer and a negative transfer. The former takes place when there are similarities between the mother tongue and English, and when the transfer of these similarities leads to correct guesses, and helps learners get things right. On the other hand, the latter is referred to as mother tongue interference.

3. The Definition of Mother Tongue Interference:

Dulay et al (1982) define interference as *"the automatic transfer, due to habit, of the surface structure of the first language onto the surface of*

the target language". (Bhela, 1999). Also, Lott (1983) "defines interference as "errors in the learner's use of the foreign language that can be traced back to the mother tongue". (Bhela, 1999).

A further definition is made by Ellis (1977) who *"refers to interference as 'transfer' which is the influence that the learner's L1 exerts over the acquisition of an L2. He argues that transfer is governed by learners' perceptions about what is transferable and by their stage of development in L2 learning. In learning a target language, learners construct their own interim rules with the use of their L1 knowledge, but only when they believe it will help them in the learning task or when they have become sufficiently proficient in the L2 for transfer to be possible". (Bhela, 1999).*

Other linguists refer to mother tongue interference as the case where the habits of the mother tongue interfere and prevent learners from acquiring the habits of the target language. Actually, extensive researches have been made in the field, and they all concentrate on the role, which mother tongue interference plays in causing learners' errors, and on the types of these errors as far as the major language skills are concerned.

4. Errors Specific to Mother Tongue Interference:

The following discussion will concentrate on the major language skills of English, as being affected by mother tongue interference. Errors, which result from this interference during the process of acquiring these skills, will be analyzed on the basis of general language functions.

When communicating in English as a foreign language, students rely on their native language structures to produce responses in English. This indicates the existence of a gap in learner's knowledge, as well as inability to express his thoughts correctly in English.

Interference from the mother tongue can be studied on various aspects: syntactically, lexically, and semantically;

1. *"Typically, a person learns a second language partly in terms of the kinds of meanings already learned in the first language. Beebe (1988) suggests that in learning a second language, L1 responses are grafted on to L2 responses, and both are made to a common set of meaning responses."*

2. *"The formal elements of L1 are used within the context of L2, resulting in errors in L2, as the structures of the L1 and L2 are different".*
3. *"Albert and Olber (1978) claim that people show more lexical interference on similar items. So, it may follow that languages with more similar structures are more susceptible to mutual interference than languages with fewer similar features". (Bhela, 1999).*

The best way to experience mother tongue interference is through analyzing learners' errors. The following lines will throw light on two case studies, which have been made on learners who study English as a foreign language. Through applying techniques of error analysis, the researchers in the two cases reveal many of the errors, which result from mother tongue interference as far as language skills are concerned.

Bhela's Study:

Baljit Bhela (1999) performed a case study on a limited number of English texts written by students. Through applying techniques of error analysis, he identified the errors resulting from

mother tongue interference as far as the syntactical and lexical aspects are concerned.

1. On The Syntactical Level:

a. When there are similar structures between the native language and English, learners tend to use English structures, partly in terms of the structures already learned in their mother tongue. Consequently, their native language responses are grafted on the English responses, and the kinds of English expressions used bear tell-tale traces of the native language structures. Errors result when there are structures in English that seem difficult to be mastered, since they are used in a different way in learners' native language, such as punctuation, capital letters, prepositions, and present and past tenses. The result of mother tongue interference in this regard will be as follows.

- 1- Learners may use their native language structures to produce appropriate responses in English, resulting in semantically acceptable texts.
- 2- Learners use native language structures interchangeably with English structures, producing inappropriate L2 responses.

- b- In the case where there are English structures that do not have equivalents in learners' native language, such as the apostrophe, and the active and passive voice, difficulties arise, since learners are forced to use structures they are unfamiliar with. Errors, which result from this problem, refer to a gap in students' knowledge. To cover this gap, learners may invent or borrow items from their mother tongue, which are approximated to the rules of English, or they tend to adjust the form of their written responses by using syntactical items, which are part of their native language.
- c- Errors may result from learners' lack of understanding of the correct use of some structures in their mother tongue. Consequently, they use them inappropriately in English writing.

2. On the Lexical Level:

"Blum-Kulka and Levenston (1983) contented that all second language learners begin by

assuming that for every word in L1 there is a single translation equivalent in L2. The assumption of word for word translation equivalence or thinking in the mother tongue (L1) is the only way a learner can begin to communicate in a second language". (Bhela, 1999). During writing, and for the purpose of expressing a certain meaning, learners may use a number of words, which can be expressed in one item in English. In addition to that, the lack of contextual items causes errors in English writing.

In all cases, mother tongue interference happens as a result of the learner's strategy of searching for and predicting equivalents in the two languages, whether formally or functionally. A high frequency of errors takes place when the two languages are distinctly different, and when there are points in English which are completely new and difficult to learn. Actually, errors resulting from mother tongue interference reveal points of difficulties, which learners face in the process of English language learning. *"To successfully learn L2 requires the L2 learner to often preclude the L1 structures from the L2 learning process, if the structures of the two languages are distinctly different".* (Bhela, 1999).

Diab's Study:

Since the purpose of this research is to reveal the difficulties, which face Arab students during the process of learning English as a foreign language, it is important to throw light on some of the errors that result from the interference of Arabic in English language learning. This study is concerned with highlighting the similarities and differences between the two languages, as far as language skills are concerned. Nuwar Diab (1996) made a case study on a limited number of Arab students, and the results would be explained on various aspects: phonological grammatical, lexical, and syntactical.

A- On the Phonological Level:

"The Arabic and English phonological systems vary extensively, not only in the range of sounds used, but also in the relative importance of vowels and consonants in expressing meaning". (Nur, 2002).

A comparison between the phonological system of Arabic and English will show that:

1. English has 22 vowels and diphthongs to 24 consonants, while Arabic has only eight vowels and diphthongs to 32 consonants.

2. English has consonant clusters:

a- Initial two-segment clusters such as: pl, pr, gr, sp.

b- Initial three-segment clusters such as : spr, skr, str, spl.

As far as initial clusters, Arabic has no equivalents, but has few clusters, which appear at the end of words. Errors, which result from Arabic language interference in this field, take place when learners tend to *"insert short vowels in order to assist pronunciation"*. (Nur, 2002).

Examples: 'pirice' for price.

'sipring' for spring.

'arrangid' for arranged.

'monthiz' for months.

3. Arabic spelling system is simple and virtually phonetic, where letters stand directly for their sounds. However, in English, there are clusters, which pronunciation is different from their spelling. Errors in pronunciations result when Arab learners attempt to apply the Arabic phonetic methodology on English

words. In addition to that, the absence of equivalents for some English consonants such as 'p' leads students to pronounce a word such as: 'stopped' as 'istobbid'.

As discussed above the differences in the phonological system between Arabic and English may result in errors in Arab learners' pronunciation of English words and sentences.

B- On the Grammatical Level:

Learners' errors, which occur in grammar and result from Arabic language interference can be highly identified in writing:

1. Agreement:

Arabic verbs agree with their subjects in person, number and gender. Hence, Arab students make few subject-verb agreement errors in their essays except where the subject's number is confusing. Another kind of agreement error occurs in the case where Arabic adjectives and adverbs agree with the nouns they modify. In English, few adjectives show agreement in number with the nouns they modify, such as 'this-these' and 'that-those'. Furthermore, there are adjectives in English, which are used to modify singular as well as plural

nouns. As a result, agreement errors of this type occur in English writings such as:

My sister goes to others shops.

Instead of: My sister goes to other shops.

The art of paragraphs writing.

Instead of: The art of paragraph writing.

2. Articles:

In English, abstract words indicating ideas, attributes, or qualities are used without the article 'the', since they belong to everybody or everything. In Arabic, such abstract words are preceded by a definite article equivalent to 'the' in English. Hence, errors pertaining to the misuse of the article 'the' will occur in students' writings. The following example will explain this idea:

Ex: The marriage is a holy ceremony.

Instead of: Marriage is a holy ceremony.

Ex: The persistence is necessary for the success.

Instead of: Persistence is necessary for success.

On the other hand, abstract words become specific when they are preceded by the article 'the' in English. They become the possession of a certain person, group, object, etc. The usual way of expressing this possession is by a phrase starting with 'of, to, or for'.

Ex: You must study geography.

But: Tom studied the geography of England.

In contrast, Arabic does not make use of an article before an abstract term when it is the possession of a specific person or object - rather, the abstract word is rendered specific by the modifying noun that follows it.

Ex: The victims of the war are many.

Instead of: The victims of war are many.

Actually, Arabic has many definite articles, but has no indefinite articles. This is because words in Arabic are all indefinite and need to be defined.

3. Prepositions:

They pose a great difficulty, since there are various prepositions in English that have the same function. For instance, the prepositions 'in', 'at', and

on', as in the following sentences, indicate place with subtle differences in usage:

He is in the garden.

He is at home.

He lives on campus.

As a result, when students are not sure which prepositions they have to use in a certain sentence, they often compare that sentence with its Arabic equivalence, giving a literal translation of the Arabic prepositions in English. However, prepositions seldom have a one to one correspondence between English and Arabic. An Arabic preposition may be translated by several English prepositions, while an English usage may have several Arabic translations. These translations may be the cause of errors such as:

Ex: I mean in this example.

Instead of: I mean by this example.

Ex: Under your disposal.

Instead of: At your disposal.

In addition to that, prepositions in Arabic are clear and easy to use. In English, prepositions such

as 'under', 'before', and 'over' are considered adverbs of time and place in Arabic.

4- Singular vs Plural Words:

Students may not be able to determine whether a certain English word is singular or plural based on its form alone. Some words that end with the plural for 's' are actually singular in number, whereas others indicate a singular or plural number while maintaining the same form. Students resort to literal translation from Arabic when determining whether a certain English word is singular or plural. Words such as: statistics, homework, and information will explain this idea:

Ex: The registrar has information's on all university faculties.

Instead of: the registrar has information on ...

C- On the Lexical Level:

Lexical errors, which result from Arabic language interference take place because of a lack in English vocabulary. Students tend to translate words from Arabic to express a certain idea in English, unaware of the English collocations. In other words, one word in Arabic can be translated into English by several words. It remains for

students to determine which word collocates with the meaning expressed in the sentence.

Ex: Doctors describe medications for patients.

Instead of: Doctors prescribe medications. (Since in Arabic, the equivalent of describe is used for medications as well as for nature).

Furthermore, Arabic is full of synonyms. A word in Arabic may have several synonyms, and each synonym has its own collocation. For example, in English the word "sword" has no synonyms equivalent to Arabic, such as: Alhusam, Almuhanad, Albatar, etc. In addition, each synonym may express a different meaning and a specific feature. The reason for this difference between English and Arabic is that in Arabic, there are adjectives that can be used as nouns.

Another point is that the relationship between the meaning of a word and its position in a sentence plays an important role in choosing the correct synonym. The following example shows how the same word is used in two different meanings.

Example: The leader sent his eyes. ("Eyes" means spies). I visited the water's eye ("Eye" means the spring).

Such sentences are possible in Arabic, and the differences can only be identified depending on the meaning the writer wants to express.

D- Semantic Errors:

Semantic errors occur when students use literal translation to convey in English flowery Arabic expressions, idioms, or proverbs, thinking that they will enrich their essays.

Ex: I cut a promise on myself.

Instead of: I promised myself.

Actually, Arabic is rich in vocabulary and images that do not have equivalents in English. Furthermore, styles in Arabic are divided into literary styles, scientific styles, and literary scientific styles. Each of these styles has its own rules in writing. The literary style, which may deal with stories, literary and social issues, can be full of metaphors, images, and adjectives. Whereas the scientific style that discusses physics and medicine should not include any metaphor or similes.

E- Syntactic Errors:

1- Word Order:

"In formal written Arabic, the verb comes first followed by the subject." (Nur, 2002). Learners may transfer this convention to English and write sentences like.

Ex: Went the student to school.

Instead of: The student went to school.

Unless learners become aware of the rules of word order in English, they will continue to commit errors of this kind.

Also, in English, adjectives usually precede the nouns they modify. However, in Arabic, they generally follow them:

Ex: Here are three rules very helpful.

Instead of: Here are three very helpful rules.

A similar error occurs with the use of adverbs, since an adverb that modifies an adjective or another adverb usually precedes that adjective or adverb. In Arabic, this is not the case:

Ex: Every person almost has a car.

Instead of: Almost, every person has a car.

2. Coordination:

In English, items in a series are separated by commas, and the coordinate conjunction 'and' is used just before the last word. In Arabic, each item in series is preceded by the conjunction 'wa' which is equivalent to 'and'.

Ex: My favorite fruits are cherries and peaches and pears and watermelons.

This sentence is correct in Arabic but odd in English.

3. Omission of the Copula:

Since Arabic has no copula, students neglect the use of these structures in English.

Ex: If you are preparing for a party but not sure of its success ...

Instead of: If you are preparing for a party but are not sure of its success ...

F. Suggestions to Solve the Problem of Mother Tongue Interference:

Depending on the previous discussion, it is clear that serious errors may result from mother tongue interference as far as language skills are concerned. However, it is difficult to force students to neglect their native language completely. Therefore, instead of letting students transfer structures and rules from their mother tongue without restrictions, researchers advise teachers to make use of learners' mother tongue for the purpose of developing English language learning. In other words, there are points where using the native language can be necessary and beneficial; students' attitudes towards using mother tongue in classroom, differ according to their learning levels as well as language aspects. To be more specific, Prodromou (2002) refers to a questionnaire, which has been addressed to students at beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels. The results come as follows:

1. On the grammatical level: beginners showed 31% approval, while intermediate and advanced showed 7%.

2. Asking for vocabulary: beginners and intermediate showed 38% acceptance while advanced showed less.

It is clear that the higher the students' level in foreign language learning, the less they accept to use mother tongue in classroom.

The question of whether or not to use students' native language in foreign language classes is especially relevant in environment where the majority of students are monolingual and monocultural. *"The struggle to avoid L1 at all costs can lead to bizarre behavior: one can end up being a contortionist trying to explain the meaning of a language item where a simple translation would save time and anguish. Further, learning a language is a difficult and often frustrating process for many learners particularly at low levels. One hundred per-cent direct methods can be especially frustrating. Limited use of the L1 can have a powerful positive effect".* (Cole, 1998).

1. When to Use Mother Tongue:

"The consensus among researchers is that English should be the primary medium of instruction. Within this realm, there is definitely a place for L1". (Cole, 1998). The following points

will show when mother tongue can be successfully used:

1. Learners' native language can be considered as *"a source on which we can draw to bring in the students' cultural background into the learning process, while keeping the focus in the classroom firmly on the use of English"*. (Cole, 1998). Mother tongue can be useful with beginners who have little or no knowledge of English. It will facilitate what they wish to say in English. In addition, mother tongue can be used to *"introduce the major differences between the L1 and L2, and the main grammatical characteristics of L2 that they should be aware of"*. (Cole, 1998).
2. Using mother tongue can facilitate the explanation of some terms in English, especially if teachers and learners have the same native language. *"teachers can exploit their students' previous L1 learning experience to increase their understanding of L2. For example, if students understand the concept of a 'noun', it is much simpler*

to translate the word 'noun than to describe it in L2." (Cole, 1998).

3. Weschler (1997) *"suggests using L1 for warm-up brainstorming. Abstract words or expressions difficult to explain in L1 are better translated. At advanced levels, there is much less tendency to 'fall back' into L2 and translation may save time. Sometimes discussion in L1 of lesson aims and areas of difficulty can motivate students."* (Cole, 1998).
4. During tense moments, it can be helpful to use L1 to relax students. However, the overuse of L1 in these or other circumstances challenges the very purpose of the class and the integrity of language learning.

2- When Not to Use Mother Tongue:

1. During speaking activities: to use mother tongue is not justified.
2. In practicing creative exercises: it is inappropriate to use learners' native language unless the instructions lead to frustration on the part of learners.

3. During listening classes: unless there are unfamiliar cultural points which have their effects on learners' comprehension, it is inappropriate to use students' mother tongue.
4. In pronunciation drills: researchers advise not to use the native language except in explaining abstract vocabulary.
5. *"The ability to define words and describe things is a useful tool for language learners, and they should master it ... If a word is simple enough it is worth taking the time to define it in L2"* (Cole, 1998). It is the role of teachers to help students describe and explain the meaning of words in English. This skill should be emphasized; otherwise, learners will continue resorting to their native language when they get in trouble. However? *"If the class is not communicating demonstrate strategies for overcoming difficulties: 'I'm sorry, I don't know the answer' or 'what do you mean?'"* (Cole, 1998).

3. Techniques of Using Mother Tongue to Promote Foreign Language Learning:

In order to use mother tongue safely, researchers propose some techniques to be applied in classroom.

1. Prodromou (2002) suggests some activities to be practiced in classroom which help students, through a direct and correct usage of mother tongue, develop target language learning:

a. Awareness Raising Activities:

These activities can be practiced through addressing a questionnaire to students about their attitudes towards using the native language. In this way, teachers will be able to open up a debate and learners' skepticism will be dealt with. Students get benefit of such an activity through being encouraged to express their views in the target language, and consequently, some of the barriers of interacting with the target language may be removed.

b. Contrasting L1 and L2:

Teachers may encourage students to make a comparison between their native language and the

target language. *"Useful areas for study in this way are collocations, proverbs, and idioms. Comparing verb-noun collocations across the two languages helps students understand how L1 interference can often give them problems. Comparing proverbs gives an insight into cultural as well as linguistic differences."* (Prodromou, 2002).

c- Research in L1, Presentation in L2:

Students are asked to write researches about famous people from their country. Learners may prefer to resort to their mother tongue for the purpose of collecting ideas and information, then present their works in English during the class. This activity helps students explore their own culture, making the native language a bridge on which successful interaction with the target language would be achieved.

2- Dodson's Bilingual Method:

The technique depends on using the audio-visual devices to help students capture correct meaning and pronunciation at the same time. Dodson adopts the idea of audio-visual textbooks which present dialogues with a picture strip on the left. These pictures are designed to closely match the meaning of the sentences in dialogues. The

teacher says each dialogue twice to avoid mother tongue interference as far as pronunciation is concerned. Also, the teacher can use oral mother tongue equivalents at sentence level to convey the meaning of unknown words or structures.

In other words, through direct succession of the foreign language stimulus and the imitation response, teachers can prevent mother tongue interference. Moreover, instead of giving words equivalents in the mother tongue, teachers provide equivalents of whole utterances or meaningful parts of utterances.

Conclusion:

As discussed above, the application of the techniques of error analysis on learners' performance, as far as language skills are concerned, reveals many points of mother tongue interference. Errors, which result from this interference, refer to a gap in learners' knowledge of the target language. The solution to cover this gap is through practicing the suitable skills and activities, which help students preclude the habits, structures, behaviors, and conventions of mother tongue from target language learning:

Cultural Differences

The next part of this chapter will concentrate on the effects of the cultural differences on language learning. The beginning will be with the definition of culture, then, we will throw light on the relationship between culture and language. After that, an explanation of the errors, which result from the cultural differences between mother tongue and English as the target language, will be dealt with in detail. The errors in discussion are related to verbal and nonverbal communication. In addition to that, the influence which culture has on both teachers and learners cannot be ignored, rather it has its impact on the process of language learning, as well as on cross-cultural communicative competence. The solutions, as suggested by researchers to overcome the problem of cultural differences, are presented through intercultural learning.

1. What is the Meaning of Culture?

Culture is defined as: *"The integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generation. Or the customary beliefs, social forms, and*

material traits of a racial, religious, or social group. On the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes a company or corporation", (Merriamwebster, 2003).

Depending on the previous definition, achieving communicative competence between people belonging to the same culture will be easy, since they share the same beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, values, and language. On the other hand, it would be difficult to make communicative competence between people from two different cultures, unless most of the activities of both cultures are acquired. Actually, it is through experiencing the other culture that a person will be able to achieve the sought after communicative competence.

2. Errors Specific to Cultural Differences between Mother Tongue and the Target Language:

Actually, language learning includes everything learners hear and see in the target language. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, it may include a wide variety of exchanges in restaurants, stores, conversations with friends, and reading newspapers. This means that activities of

learning a foreign language encompass not only those related to the use of language, but also to nonverbal activities. The importance of nonverbal activities lies in their influence on communicative competence as much as the verbal ones:

a- Nonverbal Communication:

The nonverbal communication activities include facial expressions, tones of voice, gestures, eye contact, spatial arrangements, patterns of touch, and expressive movement. This kind of communication is very important for understanding human behavior, and since it is highly affected by the cultural differences, it is inevitable that certain types of gestures in one culture may be interpreted differently in another.

During the process of English language learning, learners' errors may result from their inability to discern the correct meaning of the nonverbal activities of English, especially during practising speaking and listening skills. Arab learners who study English as a foreign language face such a problem. In fact, many English activities differ in meaning and indications from their equivalents in Arabic. Unless Arab learners acquire the correct behaviors of English people, a

misunderstanding will take place, and they will not be able to communicate successfully.

Nate Archer, in his research Exploring Nonverbal Communication, studies different aspects of nonverbal behaviors. He comes out with the result that the failure, which would happen in understanding people from other cultures, is *"because of differences in language, values, gestures, emotional expression, norms, rituals, expectations, family background, and life experiences"*.

Being mainly concerned with nonverbal communication, archer proposes a solution to overcome the problem of misunderstanding between people from different cultures. He refers to kinds of videos, which *"can serve as an important sensitizing device, and people who see the video will emerge with a greatly enhanced awareness of the importance, nature and power of culture"*. The kinds of videos he offers are:

1. The video of "A World of Differences": where samples of misunderstanding activities are collected from Chinese, American, French, Japanese etc, and *"in each case, the power and subtlety of*

cultural differences are explained and illustrated".

2. The video of "The Human Face": This video explores the role of the human face in emotions, cultural differences, attractiveness, identity, facial mythology, cosmetic surgery, pupil size changes, aging, law enforcement.
3. The video of "The Human Voice": *"which focuses on the power of the voice (verbal + nonverbal) in interpersonal communication. The emphasis is on the way we interpret a speaker's voice in terms of accent, pronunciation, emotions, honesty, sarcasm, charisma, uniqueness, lifestyle, and geographic origin".* The video indicates that people may get the correct sentence if they hear the voice of the person whom they address.
4. The video of "A World of Gestures": *"focuses on international differences in gestures, and cultural differences in nonverbal communication generally. This video examines angry gestures, obscene gestures, friendly gestures, warning*

gestures, the development of gestures in children, gang gestures, secret gestures, and embarrassing gestures".

5. The video of "The Interpersonal Perception Tasks" is a self-test video where viewers are given the chance to interpret the behaviors which they encounter. *"There is an objectively correct answer for each of the inferences tested and viewers can see how accurate their own inferences are".*

b- Verbal Communication:

The verbal communication includes activities related to the use of language. Actually studying language without cultural consideration turns to be a study of forms and vocabulary only. It is the cultural impact which brings life to language learning. The cultural factors which affect foreign language learning in general, and English in particular, are related, to a large extent, to the concept of comprehension. It is the learner's ability to comprehend the conventions of English, which will help him communicate successfully. The cultural differences and the errors which result can be clearly seen when practising the reading and writing skills.

The Cultural Factors Affecting Reading Comprehension:

"Reading is a meaning making process involving an interaction between the reader and the text. Readers use mental activities in order to construct meaning from text. These activities are generally referred to as reading strategies of reading skills ... Readers go through an ongoing process while reading, which involves the continuous process of sampling from the input text, predicting what will come next, testing and confirming predictions". (Singhal, 1998).

1. **Content:** refers to the background knowledge of learners. This knowledge includes *"knowledge of the world from everyday knowledge to very specialized knowledge, knowledge of language structures, and knowledge of texts and forms in terms of genre and organization"* (Singhal, 1998). Learners depend on this knowledge, which is created and shaped by their native culture, when they make a comparison between things already stored in their memory and the texts they are reading. Linguists assure that reading comprehension will increase when the learner feels familiar with the content of

the text. This means that the ability of the student to comprehend and interact with the text will rise when the kinds of texts in study have their equivalents in his native culture. This result indicates that learners filter information from the target language texts through cultural specific background knowledge.

To be more specific with this view, the following lines will show the importance of text content on Arab students. The knowledge, which Arab learners have about the world, is created through the environment they used to live in. Parents play an important role in helping their kids acquire the information necessary to interact with society. Such knowledge can be for the most part about life style, or even stories from Arab history. When students come to class, their reading comprehension will rise when the topics discussed are either from Arab culture or close to it.

2. Formal or textual factors refer to the organizational forms and rhetorical structures of written texts, and include knowledge of different types of texts and genres. This is besides the ability to realize the fact that different types of texts use different language

structures, vocabulary, grammar, and level of formality.

3. Linguistic factors include the decoding features needed to recognize words and how they fit together in a sentence.

Depending on the idea that learners, while reading in a foreign language recall their background knowledge, studies indicate that there are types of text structures, which recall information better than others do. To give an example, *"Arab remembered best from expository texts with comparison structures, next best from problem-solution structures and collection of descriptions, and least well from causation structures"*. (Singhal, 1998). In addition to that, texts violating learners' expectations about language patterns can have disruptive effects. This is because language patterns differ from one culture to another.

On the other hand, the differences in the writing systems and the rhetorical structures between the target language and the native language of the learner will affect reading comprehension. *"English speakers use plenty of devices for orienting the reader in terms of what is*

to follow in the text and how the reader should understand the different sections of the text. Orthographic systems vary widely, and while some languages may contain many numbers of symbols, other languages contain a limited number. Arabic has a unique writing system in that it is written and read from right to left. These kinds of differences in writing systems can pose difficulties for second language readers". (Singhal, 1998).

The following are some skills, which help learners overcome the cultural factors that may affect reading comprehension (Singhal, 1998):

1. Overview text before reading.
2. Employ context clues such as titles, subheadings, and diagrams.
3. Look for important information while reading and pay greater attention to it than to other information.
4. Attempt to relate important points in text to one another in order to understand the text as a whole.
5. Activate and use prior knowledge to interpret text, which includes content, formal and linguistic knowledge.

6. Reconsider and revise hypotheses about the meaning of the text based on text content.
7. Attempt to infer information from the text.
8. Attempt to determine the meaning of words not understood or recognized.
9. Monitor text comprehension.
10. Identify or infer main ideas.
11. Use strategies to remember text (paraphrasing, repetition, making notes, summarizing, self questioning).
12. Understand the relationship between parts of text.
13. Recognize text structure.
14. Change reading strategies when comprehension is perceived not to be proceeding smoothly.
15. Evaluate the qualities of text.
16. Reflect on and process additionally after a part has been read.
17. Anticipate or plan for the use of knowledge gained from the reading.

Although the above mentioned skills seem, for the first time, difficult to be applied altogether, it is

only through practice that learners will be able to perform them completely for the benefit of achieving reading comprehension in English.

Cultural Factors Affecting Writing:

Most learners, when writing in their native language, know the rules which govern this skill, such as, what a thesis is, or where they should place the topic sentence. However, in the case of writing in a foreign language things will change. This is because principles of writing, argument, structure, and intellectual property are not universal, rather they differ from one culture to another.

Once again, depending on the idea that learners recall their background knowledge, which is shaped by their native culture, the cultural differences in writing values, between those of the target language and their equivalents in the native language, can be a source of errors in students' writing in the target language.

On the other hand, many researchers identify the relationship between reading comprehension and writing. This is because, if learners are familiar enough with the topic they read, their ability to remember parts of it will increase, and they will not face difficulties in expressing their opinions about

the topic in discussion; consequently, the quantity of errors will decrease.

One of the main cultural factors influencing writing in English as a foreign language is related to the rhetorical conventions of English. To write effectively, learners must do more than simply mastering vocabulary and grammar. Also, the learner's ability to write eloquently in his native language, particularly Arabic, does not mean that he will be able to write in a similar level in English, unless he learns the rhetorical conventions of English. Karen Gocsik (1999) explains in the paper Cultural Differences and Its Impact on Rhetoric: An Overview, the cultural impacts on the conventions of writing:

- b. The thesis sentence: is a sentence that *"announces to the reader the stance which the writer has taken on a particular subject. It may include what is sometimes referred to as an essay map: the part of the thesis sentence that organizes the idea for the reader"* (Gocsik, 1999). Many writers place it at the end of the introduction. However, not all

cultures require their writers to use thesis sentences.

c. The topic sentence: *"In English, the topic sentence most often occurs at or near the beginning of each paragraph"*. (Goscik, 1999). This is for the purpose of letting the reader put together the gist of the argument. However, *"in some cultures, the topic sentences are often the last sentence of every paragraph. In these cultures, paragraphs are structured so that they build towards the argumentative point. The difference here is profound"*. (Gocsik, 1999). As far as Arabic is concerned, learners are asked to write a topic sentence and a topic word in their texts.

d. Concise style: in English, native speakers use sentences that are lean and mean. Other cultures prefer to use so many adjectives, adverbs, complex digressions, or they even use three or four words to express something that can be put in one word in English. In Arabic, to use

adjectives, images, metaphors and other decorations in the text is related to the kind of the topic that will be discussed. If the topic is literary or social, then students should use the literary style, which is featured by images and adjectives. Whereas if the topic is about physics or mathematics, then the style should be scientific and must not include any kind of decorations or metaphors.

Effects of the Cultural Factors on Teachers and Learners:

It is not enough to focus only on the way culture affects language skills, but interest must be paid to the main participants in the learning process, that is to say, teachers and learners, since without them language learning can not be achieved. The reason behind studying the effects of culture on teachers and learners is that they influence each other on the one hand, and the learning process on the other hand. This can be seen in the way they use their background knowledge that is shaped and informed by the culture to which they belong and the environment where they live.

"Expectations about educational roles that participants bring to the classroom influence not only their views of the class, but also their willingness to participate in different kinds of learning activities. In adult ESL classes, learners and teachers alike bring years of life experience and cultural knowledge to the instructional setting". (McGroarty, 1993).

"The FL students often possess stereotypic or culturally incorrect insights into and information regarding the various cultures, and problems which the instructor needs to overcome. The FL classroom, by the nature of its language and culture content, is the perfect place to help FL learners come to a better understanding of the cultural identities present in the various cultures, thereby short-cutting any possible stereotypes. In fact, as Morain (1995) states, "suspicion of generalizations and stereotypes is indeed one of the gifts (students) can receive in foreign language class that will serve them well across the curriculum" (Shook, 1998).

To achieve cultural communicative competence in the classroom, teachers must have a cultural awareness about their own culture, in order to be able to acquire the necessary knowledge

about their students' culture and respect their own identities. *"Teachers need general socio cultural knowledge about child and adolescent development, about second language acquisition, about the ways that socioeconomic circumstances, language and culture shape school performance. Teachers need a clear sense of their ethnic and cultural identities in order to be able to understand and appreciate those of their students. They also need to become more aware of how their own cultural biases may influence their judgments about students' performance and obstruct their students' ability to learn".* (Zeichner, 1995). Teachers need also to collect information about the values, practices, and learning styles of their students' culture.

The following lines will introduce three kinds of solutions to be applied by teachers. The first presents ways that help achieve cultural and linguistic interaction, the second provides tactics to be applied in the classroom, while the third proposes some approaches.

Zeichner's Steps:

They are proposed to achieve successful interaction between teachers and learners both culturally and linguistically:

1. Use cultural referents in both verbal and nonverbal forms to communicate instructional and institutional demands.
2. Organize instruction to build on rules of discourse from the home and community culture.
3. Show equal respect to the values and norms of the home and community cultures and those of the school culture.

A. Tactics to be Considered:

Since the aim of teachers is to remove the cultural communication barriers from the classroom environment, it is necessary that they pass to their students certain tactics which help in achieving the intercultural learning, (Zeinstejer, 2002).

1. Remove stereotypical language performances by applying online communication, which brings awareness of the need to choose words, images and situations, and avoid using qualifiers reinforcing racial stereotypes.
2. Reduce the violations of cultural rules during discussions and conversations.

3. Teachers should respect the rules for attentiveness and distance, and understand that characters and symbols may reflect different beliefs or values for different groups.
4. Teachers should pay attention to the fact that cultures will vary in what they consider humor or taboo, which might give rise to misinterpretation and resentment.
5. Do the best to be aware of the difficulties leading to possible misunderstanding in online communication practice, for the purpose of achieving a similar atmosphere of awareness and respect in their face to face in classroom.
6. Shift the stress on accuracy to communicative competence as an educational goal. This is instead of being *"entrenched in the traditional approach based on four skills, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary drills"*. (Shunichiro, 2002).
7. Another factor that should be considered is the need to understand the cultural inclinations of students with different racial background.

8. Teachers should help their students acquire the appropriate behaviors in the classroom, since a breach of the cultural compact related to classroom behavior has a negative impact on instructions. These behaviors include speed delivery, silence, turn taking, and rules of entering into conversation in progress. *"Most teachers have experienced students who appear disrespectful because the teacher does not take charge, or who are often late turning in assignments, because their cultures have a more flexible definition of 'on time'."*

B- Shook's Approach:

In his paper: Student Investigation of Cultural Identity in The Foreign Language Classroom (1998) Shook proposes an approach that helps learners learn about and appreciate not only the foreign language culture and language, but also their own culture and language. This approach includes three stages:

1. Pre-investigation: teachers must assure *"that the curriculum recognizes any decisive components in the search for cultural identity pertinent to the discussion"*. (Shook, 1998). This means

that teachers should review the instructional materials to assure themselves that the materials, which they are going to teach, emphasize the linguistic and cultural information required for the target language.

2. Student investigation: it is the role of the teacher to "help students know how to carry out their investigations". *"Classroom activities need to be designed to help students learn review practice proper interview protocol"* (Shook, 1998) in the target language.
3. Post-investigations: where the results on the investigation are presented. *"Students need to be made responsible for accurate cultural information and language use: therefore, it is of utmost importance that such presentations are evaluated by the language instructor in some formal way"*.

Effects of the Cultural Factors on Learners' Behaviors:

The following lines will throw light on some cultural factors which influence learners' behaviors and their performance during the learning process:

1. The influence of the environment where learners live will be seen in the background knowledge learners have about the world. In other words, learners used to live in one sole world, which would be their homes, cities, or even their countries. These are all local environments where there are people who share the same language, values, thoughts, and sometimes attitudes.
2. The second factor is related to learners' expectations about teachers. Learners may bring to the classroom the expectations prevailed in their home countries about the educational role teachers should play. Such a view has its influence on learners' performance as well as their willingness to participate in the learning activities. So, *"learners from more traditional educational systems may expect teachers to behave in a more formal and authoritarian fashion"*

during classes, and may be displeased, puzzled or offended if a teacher uses an informal instructional style, such as using first names in class or allowing learners to move freely around the room". (McGroarty, 1993).

If the teacher does not meet learners' expectations, their participation in classroom activities will decrease. But if learners appreciate the way their teacher behaves, their willingness to interact with his instructions regarding the learning process will rise. *"Learners may also want teachers to maintain a clearly ordered pattern of classroom activity, and perhaps engage in extensive correction of grammatical form of pronunciation during all activities, rather than at specified points in a lesson or not at all. Failure to conform to these ideals may give learners the impression of lazy or inadequate class preparation on the part of the teacher".* (McGroarty, 1993).

3. The third factor is concerned with the topics learners are willing to study. *"Cultural expectation regarding the nature of education and what is appropriate to talk about may also affect the kinds of topics students are willing to pursue in class. Cultural as well as*

personal sensitivity is vital in knowing if, when, and how to introduce topics or lessons that may be distasteful or difficult". (McGroarty, 1993).

Intercultural Learning:

It is obvious that culture has its effect on language learning as well as on the participants of the learning process. To remove the cultural barriers on all levels, researchers identify the importance of what they call 'intercultural learning'.

The intercultural learning may be defined as *"the process of becoming more aware of and better understanding of one's own culture and other cultures around the world"*. (Rose, 2002). So, intercultural learning can be considered as a part of language learning. It aims *"to increase international and cross cultural tolerance and understanding"*. (Rose, 2002).

Actually, intercultural awareness or intercultural learning is crucial, since it identifies the significance of being aware of cultural relativity of the major language skills: writing, reading, listening, and speaking. *"If language is seen as a social practice, culture becomes the very core of language teaching. Cultural awareness must then*

be viewed as enabling language proficiency. Culture in language teaching is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading and writing." (Rose, 2002).

Furthermore, developing the intercultural awareness of learners leads to raise their awareness of their own culture, and consequently, their ability to interpret and understand the culture of the target language will increase. This idea can be referred to as intercultural communicative competence, and can be achieved, basically, through practicing certain skills, which would seem similar to the way the process of learning a second or a foreign language happens, *"It is not just a body of knowledge, but a set of practices requiring knowledge, skills and attitudes"*. (Rose, 2002).

The following lines provide some explanations about kinds of skills that can be practised in order to achieve the required "intercultural competence":

1. Observing, Identifying and Recognizing:

Through interaction, the learner should observe the behavior of the target language native speakers on different occasions, on the purpose of

for identifying the suitable actions and expressions used. The reason behind suggesting this skill is that people behave and speak according to certain attitudes and traditions, which their culture implies. As a result, the learner will be able to recognize many of the cultural aspects of the target language, whether they are part of verbal or nonverbal communication activities, and particularly those relating to language skills.

If, for instance, the teacher is an English language native speaker, such a skill can be practiced in the classroom, through observing the teacher's reactions in response to learners' behaviors, especially if they were nonnative speakers of English.

In the case of practising the writing skill, students can observe, identify and recognize the performance of target language native speakers out of their classroom, by interacting with people through the internet. The World Wide Web provides learners with the opportunity to participate in communities and exchange opinions and writings. This facility improves learners' ability to react, not only to topics related to their learning materials, but also to various issues.

2. Comparing and Contrasting:

When the learner recognizes some of the cultural aspects of the target language, he will be able to compare them with their equivalents in his own language. It is through revealing the similarities and differences between the culture of the target language and the culture of the mother tongue that the intercultural competence can be achieved successfully.

3. Negotiating Meaning:

This skill identifies the importance of dealing with the concept of meaning, basically, the meaning of the cultural attitudes, behaviors, and expressions, as represented by language. Intercultural competence can be achieved if the learner succeeds in negotiating the underlying meaning of the various cultural activities that he encounters. Furthermore, he can apply a contrastive study between the meaning of the cultural activities in the target language and their equivalents in his own language. Applying the previously mentioned comparison in parallel with practising this skill will increase the intercultural awareness of the learner, not only in the culture of the target language, but also in the culture to which he belongs.

To give an example, the application of this skill can be seen on the phonological and syntactical aspects of English, because, if learners are able to identify the meaning that can be ascribed to many phonetic items or suffixes in their mother tongue, then, they will be able to recognize the meaning of their equivalents in English.

4. Dealing with or Tolerating Ambiguity:

Every culture has many verbal and nonverbal communication activities which imply ambiguity, and these are represented in language through indirect sentences, hints, or intonation. To become competent in the culture of the other language requires the ability to discern the various ambiguous forms used by the native speakers. *"Intonation, coupled with preverbal means of communication like mime and gesture, can convey very different meanings and is often the source of misunderstanding between native and non-native speakers of language".* (Vintar, 2002).

5. Effective Interpreting Message:

This skill reveals points that seem similar to the ones already mentioned in the previous paragraph. In other words, there are certain messages in culture that may be interpreted in a

way that looks far from their real meaning. Actually, this skill helps learners to be encountered with several kinds of messages and their correct interpretation.

6. Limiting the Possibility of Misinterpretation:

Learners can limit the points that cause misinterpretation on the part of the other culture's native speakers through tracing the behavior of those people as much as possible. The importance of this skill results from the fact that learners may transfer from their cultures certain activities which they find similar to the ones they encounter in the target culture. This situation leads to misinterpretation because of the differences between cultures and their impacts on language and behavior. That is why it is important for learners to have an intercultural awareness of their own culture and language, so that they will not behave or say things that may be misinterpreted by people from other cultures.

7. Defining One's Own view while Acknowledging the Legitimacy of Others:

This point has a reference to the process of language learning discussed in the first chapter, because as presented, learners have their own

syllabus, meaning that, what is taught is not the same as what is stored. Similarly, learners are already equipped with a certain cultural knowledge, so, they need to develop their ability to provide views about the other culture's activities. To become competent in another culture and language does not mean to forget one's own culture, or become another person, but learners should have their own opinions about the attitudes which rule the target culture.

8. Accepting Difference:

Cultures all over the world have similarities and differences. It is important for learners to accept the differences found in other cultures and make use of them, in order to achieve the required cross cultural communicative competence.

Applying the above skills makes the intercultural communicative competence a more attainable goal. Actually, intercultural awareness is a fundamental feature of language and an integral part of language learning. It is the role of the teacher to find the materials, which have cultural and intercultural themes as their content, and apply them in the classroom. *"Cross cultural communication is the most important and vital*

issue for all online communication. This is because cross cultural communication is and will be the only gate to life, the only way to keep nations' identity and to be there in a seat around the global round table". (Fayed, 2002).

Suggested Solutions to Overcome the Problem of Cultural Differences:

Actually, many researchers have suggested that the best solution to remove the cultural barriers and achieve cross-cultural communicative competence is to integrate cultural products, practices, and perspectives in every lesson.

However, the solution we suggest is concerned with the use of the internet. The reason behind choosing the World Wide Web as a device to remove the cultural obstacles is that it connects people of various cultures and languages all over the world.

Nowadays, many websites offer forms and mailing groups for the purpose of exchanging opinions, attitudes, and experience. As for the forums, they are of various kinds, political, social, literary, technical, etc. Since these forums are basically designed for the benefit of all, people from different places in the world can join them. On

the other hand, the idea of joining a community through mailing groups provides the opportunity to send various messages which may include poems, audio-video recorder of a lesson, a piece of news, or even a story.

If learners join one of the previous forums or groups, they will be able to exchange with people from other cultures many opinions about language skills, syllabuses, their attitudes towards certain aspects of language, or even any other topic they prefer. The benefit of this technology is that it increases the possibility of developing learners' interaction with other cultures and languages, instead of being restricted to classroom's activities.

"The advent of internet has opened up an unlimited array of information as well as a new medium of communication, both fundamental tools for EFL, and ESL, teachers in the world. Undoubtedly, the combination of cultures resulting from the massive use of this rapidly spreading tool affects human relationships. It is definitely up to all second language teachers to have the knowledge, develop the sensitivity and appreciate the importance of understanding the diversity in communication styles, to be able to become more

insightful observer of other cultures, and a more successful communication". (Zeinstejer, 2002).

A Description of Arabic

Phonology

The Arabic and English phonological systems vary extensively, not only in the range of sounds used, but also in the relative importance of vowels and consonants in expressing meaning. While English has 22 vowels and diphthongs to 24 consonants, Arabic has only eight vowels and diphthongs to 32 consonants.

Consonant Clusters

English has far more consonant clusters than Arabic. Some initial two-segment clusters which Arabic does not have corresponding equivalents to, include pr, pl, gr, thr, thw, sp. The three-segment initial consonant clusters are entirely absent in Arabic, e.g., clusters such as spr, skr, str, spl. Faced with the challenge of such consonant clusters, Arabic speakers will often insert short vowels in order to "assist" pronunciation in the following

manner 'perice' or 'pirice' for price 'ispring' or 'spring' for spring.

The range of consonant clusters appearing at the end of words is also much smaller in Arabic. In dramatic contrast to English, which has 78 three-segment clusters and fourteen four-segment clusters occurring at the end of words, Arabic has none. Again, faced with such terminal clusters, Arabic speakers tend to insert short vowels to assist pronunciation 'arrangid' for arranged, 'monthiz' for months, 'nexist' for next.

Teachers will often encounter examples of such pronunciations, which also can carry over into the spelling of such English words by students whose mother tongue is Arabic.

Influence of English Spelling on Pronunciation

While there are no similarities between the Arabic and English writing systems, Arabic spelling within its own system is simple and virtually phonetic. Letters stand directly for their sounds. Arabic speakers attempt, therefore, to pronounce English words using the same phonetic methodology. Add to this the salience of consonants in Arabic and you get severe pronunciation problems caused by the influence of

the written form 'istobbid' for stopped (the 'p' sound does not exist in Arabic) 'forigen' for foreign.

Rhythm and Stress

Arabic speakers can have problems grasping the unpredictable nature of English word stress since Arabic is a stress-timed language. In stark contrast with English, word stress in Arabic is predictable and regular. The idea that stress can alter meaning, as in con'vict (verb) and 'convict (noun) is utterly foreign. Arabic words that are spelled identically often appear and mean completely different things, but will have dissimilar short vowels which count as sounds and change the meaning altogether. Phrase and sentence rhythms are similar in both Arabic and English languages, and should cause few problems. Primary stresses occur more frequently in Arabic while unstressed syllables are pronounced more clearly. As with English, the unstressed syllable has neutral vowels, but such vowels are not 'swallowed' as in English, Arabs reading English will often a void contracted forms and elisions, and read with a rather heavy staccato rhythm.

Intonation

Intonation patterns in Arabic are similar to English in contour and meaning. However, Arabic speakers use rising tones rather than structural markers to denote questions, suggestions and offers far more frequently than English speakers, and this practice is often carried over into the spoken English of Arabic speakers. When reading aloud, however, as opposed to talking, the Arabic speaker tends to intone of chant, reducing intonation to a low fall at the ends of phrases and sentences. Speech making, news reading and religious recitation are all quite different in rhythm and intonation from normal speech. Consequently, Arabic speakers called on to read aloud in front of a group may produce a very unnatural recitation because they see the process of formal reading as distinct from everyday speech.

The grammatical structure of Arabic, a Semitic language, is very different from that of Indo-European languages such as English. These great differences must be borne in mind when Arabic speakers are mixed with European students. The basis of the Arabic language is the three-consonant root. A notion such as writing, cooking, or eating is represented by three consonants in a

particular order. All verb forms, nouns, adjectives, participles, etc, are then formed by putting these three-root consonants into fixed vowel patterns, modified sometimes by simple prefixes and suffixes.

Example #1

Root /k/ /t/ /b/ (= writing) A person who does this for a living *katteb* (= a writer).

Passive participle *maktoob* (= written) Present tense *yaktubu* (= he writes it).

Example #2

Root /g/ /r/ /h/ (= wounding or cutting) A person who does this for a living *garraah* (= a surgeon).

Passive participle *marooh* (= wounded or a battle casualty). Present tense *yagruhu* (= he wounds him).

There are over 50 such patterns. While not all forms are found for each root, the three-consonant root is the structural basis of the language. It follows that Arabic speakers have great difficulty in grasping the confusing range of patterns for all words in English, that nouns, verbs, and adjectives

follow no regular patterns to distinguish one from another, and may, indeed, have the same orthographic form. Such regularities of morphology as English has, particularly, in the area of affixes, will be readily grasped by Arabic speakers, e.g., -ing, -able, un-, etc.

Word Order

In formal written Arabic the verb comes first followed by the subject. This convention is followed more in writing than in speech, and may transpose to English writing e.g, Decided the minister yesterday to visit the school.

Questions and Negatives: Auxiliaries

The auxiliary "do" has no equivalent in Arabic where no specific question word is used; a question is marked only by its rising intonation.

e.g. You went to London? You like Coffee?

Note that the colloquial Arabic for "where?" is "wayn?", which is often confused with "when".

Negatives are formed by putting a particle (laa or maa) before the verb e.g. He not play football.

The Verb to Be

There is no verb "to be" in Arabic in the present tense. The copula (am, is, are) is not expressed. It is therefore, commonly, omitted in English by Arabic speakers, particularly in present progressive forms.

e.g. He teacher. The boy tall. He going to school.

Pronouns

Arabic verb forms incorporate the personal pronouns, subject and object, as prefixes and suffixes. It is common to have them repeated in English as part of the verb, e.g. John he works there.

Articles

There is no indefinite article in Arabic, and the definite article has a range of use different from English. The indefinite article causes particular problems as it is commonly omitted with singular and plural countables:

e.g. This is book of This book (for This is a book) He was soldier.

When the English indefinite article has been learned by the Arabic speaker, it tends to be used wherever the definite article is not used, e.g, There are a books. I want a rice.

There is a definite article form in Arabic, though it takes the form of a prefix (al-). It is used, as in English, to refer back to indefinite nouns previously mentioned, and also for unique reference (the sun, on the floor, etc).

The most common problem with the definite article arises from interference from the Arabic genitive construction.

English	Arabic
John's book (or The book of John)	Book John
A man's work (or The work of a man)	Work Man
The teacher's car (or The car of the teacher)	Car the teacher

Most errors of word order and use of articles in genitive constructions are interference of this kind:

e.g. This is the book the teacher. This is the key door.

It follows that Arabic speakers have great difficulties with the Saxon genitive construction.

The special cases in which English omits the article, e.g. in bed, at dawn, on Thursday, for breakfast, etc, usually take the definite article in Arabic.

e.g. At the sunset we broke our fast. What would you like for the breakfast?

All days of the week, some months in the Muslim calendar, and many names of towns, cities and countries include the definite article in Arabic, which is often translated, appropriately or not:

e.g. We lived in the India We had a flat in the Khartoum. On Monday we went to Cardiff.

Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives follow nouns in Arabic and agree in gender and number. This may cause beginners to make mistakes:

e.g. He is man tall (for He is a tall man).

Adverbs are used less commonly in Arabic than in English and, except for adverbs of time, do not have a fixed pattern. Adverbs of manner are often expressed in a phrase quickly is expressed "with speed", and dangerously as "in a dangerous way". There is frequent confusion between the adjective and adverb forms in English, and the adjective form is usually overused:

e.g. He drives very dangerous.

Prepositions and Particles

Arabic has a wealth of fixed prepositions and particles, with both verbs and adjectives. Many of these do not coincide with their direct English translations.

e.g. to arrive to be short of, afraid from, angry on, near from, an expert by

Some prepositions have verbal force:

"On" expresses obligation. E.g. It is on me that I pay him.

"To" and 'for' express possession, E.g. This book is to me/for me (for This book is mine).

"With" expresses present possession. E.g. With me my camera. (for I have my camera with me).

"For" expresses purpose E.g. I went home for (I) get my book (for I went home to get my book).

The Active and Passive Voices

There are active and passive forms for all tenses in Arabic, but they are virtually identical differing only in the (unwritten) short vowelling. A passive verb in a text is therefore only recognizable as such from its context. The passive voice is used far less frequently in Arabic writing than in English, and hardly at all in everyday speech. Thus while the concepts of active and passive will readily be understood, the uses and forms of the passive cause problems.

Vocabulary

The acquisition of vocabulary is particularly difficult for Arab learners of English. Only a minimal number of words in English are borrowed from Arabic. A small range of mainly technical words, such as computer, radar, helicopter, and television, have been taken into Arabic, but these are common to most languages.

Writing System (Orthography and Punctuation)

Arabic orthography is a cursive system, running from right to left. Only consonants and long vowels are written. There is no upper and lower case distinction, nor can the isolated forms of letters normally be juxtaposed to form words. Arabic speakers must, hence, learn an entirely new alphabet for English, including a capital letter system, and then master its rather unconventional spelling patterns. All aspects of writing in English cause major problems for Arabic speakers.

Punctuation

Arabic punctuation is now similar to western style punctuation, though some of the symbols are inverted or reversed, e.g., a reversed question mark, and comma. The use of full stops and commas is much freer than in English, and it is common to begin each new sentence with And or So. Connected writing in English tends therefore to contain long, loose sentences, linked by commas and "ands".

NOTE: The markings on top and underneath the writing sample provided should not be confused with punctuation. They are, in fact, the short vowels.

(Nur Abdulmanan Mohamaed, A Description of Arabic, 2002).





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