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**English Section**

**Written Grammatical Errors made by Algerain EFL  
Learners at the Middle School: An Investigation of L1  
Transfer through Error Analysis**

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Degree of Master in Sociolinguistics  
and Gender Studies

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# **Dedication**

*I dedicate this proudly to:*

*My beloved parents mom, and dad, thank you for your unconditional love and care.*

*May god protect you and bless you with his best graces*

*To my sister “Fatma “ and my brother “Aymen” much love and respect for your support and care”.*

*To my friend Radia may god protects you and guards you”*

**Chahinez**

# **Dedication**

*I dedicate this proudly to:*

*My beloved parents mom, and dad, thank you for your unconditional love and care.*

*May god protect you and bless you with his best graces*

*To my sister “Assia“ and my brother “Mourad” much love and respect for your support and care*

*To my colleagues “Zohra” and “Amira” for their support and encouragement*

*To my friend Chahinez may god protects you and guards you”*

**Sarra**

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# **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

## List of abbreviations

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A. A: Algerian Arabic.

C. A: Contrastive Analysis.

C. A: Classical Arabic.

E. A: Error Analysis.

E. F. L: English as a Foreign Language.

L1. T: Native Language Transfer.

L1: First Language (i.e. Arabic).

L2: Second Language (i.e. English).

N. N. S: Non Native Speaker.

N. S: Native Speaker.

T. L: Target Language.

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## **Abstract**

The present research aims at investigating the effect of first language (L1) transfer on Algerian EFL learners written productions. It attempts analyse those errors in order to find their possible sources. An Error Analysis (EA) procedure is used to predict and explain errors extracted from a selected sample of 25 papers written by BEM pupils at Ibn Aichouch Mhamed middle school at Karman district ,Tiaret. The analysis is paired with interviews with five trainer teachers to help determine whether L1 transfer is, in fact, influencing learners' errors predicted by Contrastive Analysis (CA). Learners in this study make L1 errors along with other errors. Although an important statistical difference is found between the frequency of developmental errors and transfer errors, L1 transfer errors are still common for many learners in this data; however, the major cause of learners' errors is not transfer errors. The incorrect usage of various grammatical structures and word-formation clarifies clearly the evidence of overgeneralization errors as a result of students' ignorance of the rules governing the grammatical structures of English language. The analysis of the interviews suggested also that L1 plays a crucial role in influencing learners' errors and emphasizes the fact that there exist other factors affecting their writing performance.

### **Key words:**

Grammatical errors - L1 transfer - contrastive analysis - error analysis - Brevet learners.

# **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

## General introduction

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Writing is an “intricate” and complex task; it is the “most difficult of the language abilities to acquire” (Allen & Corder, 1974, p. 177). Its level of difficulty varies between native speakers (NS) who think in the language used (English) and non-native speakers (NNS) who think in their native language (Arabic). While writing, non-native speakers have, in general, to think about all those rules they need to apply, rules that native speakers are supposed to have automatized. Therefore, non-native speakers are more prone to making mistakes and/or committing errors.

Errors are “systematic,” i.e. likely to occur repeatedly and not recognized by the learner. Hence, only the teacher or researcher would locate them, the learner wouldn't (Gass & Selinker, 1994). And it is in this light that it is chosen to focus on learners' errors not mistakes. Corder (1967, 1971) and James (1998) reveal a criterion that helps to distinguish between mistake and error: it is the self-correctability criterion. A mistake can be self-corrected, but an error cannot.

As teachers of English , we are well aware of the fact that our Arabic speaking learners in grade 10, brevet section, commit a lot of errors in paragraph writing. These learners have been studying English for four years and still, their errors are numerous; basic errors that are supposed to be mastered.

These errors may correspond to negative transfer, suggesting the learners' reliance on their first language (L1) led them to produce ungrammatical sentences in their foreign language (L2) consciously or subconsciously.

We knew that they were not “thinking in English” but we did not have the tools to explain the **how** and the **why**.

The interest in researching on this was too see whether the same features were problematic to our Arabic EFL learners ,whether L1 transfer accounted for the difficulty learners faced and to learn explicitly about its effect on language learning.

Hence, we have decided to conduct an error analysis; “the best tool for describing and explaining errors made by speakers of other languages “(Johanson, 1975) .To achieve this, we have analyzed errors made by Arabic EFL learners at the middle school. The analysis focused mainly on the grammatical features. the findings

## General introduction

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may be helpful to EFL teachers in identifying causes of errors, it helps them understand the role L1 plays in the acquisition of these features and in order to know the sources of these errors and the reasons behind their continued occurrence and investigate whether the errors were in fact, inspired by L1 transfer.

Our research question is then:

**“Is negative L1 transfer/interference the major cause for errors in the English writings of BEM pupils?”**

This question implies three sub-questions:

- 1- Is this interference due to the differences between the grammatical systems of L1 and L2?
- 2- In addition to L1 interference, are there any other sources of learners' errors?
- 3- Are there other factors that affects negatively learners' writing performance?

For this purpose, the following hypotheses are suggested as tentative answers to the above questions:

**“L1 Arabic transfer is mainly the main reason behind learners' errors”**

- 1- “The difference between grammatical systems of Arabic and English may be the principal cause of interference”.
- 2- “Other than L1 interference, there are other sources of learners errors”.
- 3- “There are other factors affecting learners' writing performance”.

In order to answer our main research question, we are going to use two methods of investigation. First, an error analysis procedure investigating the influence of L1 transfer in the production of errors. Then, analysing teachers' attitudes towards learners' transfer habits through interview data.

This research work includes a general introduction, three chapters and a general conclusion. The general introduction is devoted to the aims of research and to a brief discussion of the subject.

Chapter one will attempt to provide first a theoretical background for:



## General introduction

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a) Error Analysis, b) Models for Error Analysis, c) Steps of Error Analysis and second the purpose of the current study.

Chapter two addresses the context of the study, the data and the analysis methods.

Chapter three is devoted to the discussion of the results and findings after examining the set of data ( Identifying , describing , categorizing , and diagnosing Arabic speakers' errors in English writing in order to find the sources of those errors).

Finally, in the general conclusion, a summary of the goals of the study and findings are discussed, it also addresses the implications of the findings as well as Discusses the limitations of this study and proposes future areas of research.

# **CHAPTER ONE:**

## **Literature review**

**Introduction:**

Grammar is one of the most important components of any language. In this chapter, we highlight the importance of grammar for language learners and shed light on two major analyses adopted by applied linguists to analyze learner errors, namely contrastive analysis (CA) and Error Analysis (EA). Then, we review the literature on the use of error analysis as a useful procedure to investigate L1 transfer and provide a theoretical background for error analysis, models for error analysis, and steps of error analysis. After that, we describe differences between Arabic and the grammar of English and provide an overview of studies of Arabic L1 transfer related to grammatical features.

We also examine related terms such as interlingual errors, negative L1 transfer, interlanguage, and intralingual errors.

In the final section of this chapter we discuss the purpose of our study along with the questions guiding our research.

**1.1. The importance of grammar**

According to Zhange (2009), language learners have to have grammar knowledge in addition to other skills in order to achieve communicative competence which is the goal of language acquisition. In simple words, Grammar is one important tool language learners need for successful interaction with other language users. Scholars such as Ur (2006) focuses on the fact that “A knowledge –implicit or explicit- of grammatical rules is essential for the mastery of language” Because learning a language entails learning its grammar, Hebermas (1979) says that :

*“communicative competence involves communicating in accordance with that fundamental system of rules that adult subjects master to the extent that they can fulfill the conditions for a successful employment of sentences in utterances”*

There are two main factors that might affect a person’s credibility in some contexts, grammar poverty and the lack of proficiency due to inappropriate grammar knowledge. According to Praise and Meenakshi (2014) “*Glaring errors in spelling and punctuation are judged before the content of the work*”. (p. 101). So, to analyze pupils grammatical errors, researchers varied their analytical approaches. Mainly two major analyses have been used in investigating language learners grammatical errors, Contrastive Analysis (CA) and Error Analysis (EA)

**1.2. Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis**

Decades ago, many scholars such as Henry Sweet and Harold Palmer doubted that the second language acquisition is affected by the learners first language.

On the other hand, according to Van Patten & Williams (2015), language learning, just like any other behavior, was acquired through

repetitions aimed at overcoming the effect of learners' L1 and achieving L2 competence. (p. 20).

In the mid 1940's Charles Fries set up contrastive Analysis (CA). He argued that in order for language teaching materials to be effective, they need to include explicit descriptions of the differences and similarities between the learners' first and second language (Khansir&Tabande, 2014, p. 64)

CA attracted the "most spirited controversies" in the field of foreign language teaching, and According to Sridhar (1975), Robert Lado was one of the its strongest advocates (p.3). Lado's book "Linguistics Across Cultures" highlighted the contrastive analysis of vocabulary, grammar structures and sound system of many languages. His analyses showed detailed comparisons between learners' L1 and L2 and predicted areas of potential difficulties that learner might face based on those comparisons (Myles, 2010). Scholars were inspired by Lado's book to design teaching materials based on CA which led to the birth of Michigan Test of English language Proficiency (Kransch, 2007).

However, after Chomsky's (1959) criticism of verbal behaviorism, CA's association with Skinner's behaviorist theory led to skepticism about it. Chomsky's theory says that children produce novel language constructions that they had never heard before. Therefore, he argued that children are born with an innate ability which named as "Universal Grammar" which gave them the ability to learn a language.

His theory puts behaviorism and CA in danger. In the 1960's, Corder (1967) challenged behaviorism and CA by arguing that most of learners' errors were due to their interlanguage. He added that errors derived from learners attempt to test hypothesis about the new language. According to Corder (1967), learners errors were not caused by the "Persistence of old habits" caused a major shift from (CA) to (EA). (Myles, 2010)

The CA theory which was used to predict learners' errors to highlight the difficulties that learners face in learning two languages, was replaced by another theory "*CA was assigned an exploratory role*" (Saajavara, 2000, p. 28)

The use of CA was mixed with EA. Learners data were first observed through EA. Once errors were analyzed researchers used CA to highlight errors made by learner's negative transfer of their L1 knowledge, which helped them to find out that L1 transfer accounted for some, but not all, the difficulty faced by language learners (Kramersch, 2007)

Since 2000, CA and EA were mostly coupled in studies which made them as a tradition needed to be followed by researchers in all their research studies. For that, this study followed this tradition as well. According to Sajaavara (2000), "*contrastive analysis remains a useful tool in the search for potential sources of trouble in foreign language learning*" (p. 208). In other words, the use of CA helps researchers to differentiate between errors that learners face because of their L1 and interlingual errors. With the accessibility of learner corpora, the use of CA increased by the 2000's which helped researchers and language instructors to obtain wide data.

Thus, both CA and EA were applied in the analysis of learners' data in studies; Hong et al (2011) for instance used the English of Malaysian school students to examine sources of errors in using English collocation. Furthermore, Paquout (2017) study which used the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE) to analyze the use of English lexical bundles by French and Spanish L1 EFL learners.

### **1.3. The use of error analysis as a useful procedure**

As the stronger version of CA was predictive in nature as it looked to estimate learners errors based on the similarities or differences between languages, the CA's softer version is exploratory and usually paired with EA which helped explaining sources of errors rather than hypothesizing about them applying CA

in analyzing learners' errors, helped providing more perceptions about the source of the difficulties Arabic EFL learners face and assist teachers understand the reason learners of L1 background find the investigated areas problematic. Furthermore, Richards and Sampson (1974) argued that:

*“At the level of pragmatic classroom experience, errors analysis will continue to provide one means by which the teacher assesses learning and teaching and determines priorities for future effort”.* (p. 15).

According to Corder (1974), error analysis is composed of two main objects; theoretical and applied. The theoretical object serves to *“elucidate what and how a learner learns when he studies a second language”*. And the applied object serves to enable the learner to *“learn more efficiently by exploiting our knowledge of his dialect for pedagogical purposes”*. The investigation of errors can be at the same time diagnostic and prognostic. It is diagnostic because it can tell us the learner's state of the language (Corder, 1967) at a given point during the learning process, and prognostic because it can tell course organizers to reorient language learning materials on the basis of the learners' current problems.

#### **1.4. Error analysis**

**Systematically analyzing errors made by language learners makes it possible to determine areas that need reinforcement in teaching (Corder, 1974).**

EA is defined as a type of linguistic analysis that concentrates on learners' errors. It consists of a comparison between the errors made in the target language (TL) and that TL itself. Pit Corder is considered the “Father” of

Error analysis. EA took a new path due to his article entitled “The Significance of Learner Errors” (1967).

#### **1.4.1. The notion of error**

It is essential here to make a distinction between mistake and error; both Corder (1967, 1971) and James (1998) reveal a criterion that helps us to do so: it is the self-correctability criterion. A mistake can be self-corrected, but an error cannot. Errors are “systematic,” i.e. likely to occur repeatedly and not recognized by the learner. Hence, only the teacher or researcher would locate them, the learner wouldn't (Gass & Selinker, 1994). And it is in this light that it is chosen to focus on learners' errors not mistakes.

Corder presented a completely different point of view about errors which used to be “flaws” that needed to be eliminated. He debated that errors play an important role in and of themselves “for learners themselves, errors are ‘indispensable’, since the making of errors can be regarded as a device the learner uses in order to learn” In 1994, errors were defined by Gass & Selinder as “red flags” of the learners' knowledge of the second language. Errors are believed to contain valuable information about strategies people use in the acquisition of a language which attracted researchers' interests. (Richards, 1974; Taylor, 1975; Dulay and Burt, 1974).

#### **1.4.2. Models for error analysis**

Corder (1967 & 1974) identified a model for error analysis which included 3 stages:

1. Data collection: Recognition of idiosyncrasy;
2. Description: Accounting for idiosyncratic dialect ;
3. Explanation (the ultimate object of error analysis).



Brown (1994, pp. 207-211) and Ellis (1995, pp. 51-52) elaborated on this model. Ellis (1997, pp. 15-20) and Hubbard et al. (1996, pp. 135-141) gave practical advice and provided clear examples of how to **identify and analyze** learners' errors. The initial step requires the **selection** of a corpus of language followed by the **identification** of errors. The errors are then **classified**. The next step, after giving a grammatical analysis of each error, demands an **explanation** of different types of errors.

Moreover, Gass&Selinker (1994, p. 67) identified 6 steps followed in conducting an error analysis: Collecting data, Identifying errors, Classifying errors, Quantifying errors, Analyzing source of error, and Remediating for errors.

### **1.4.3. Steps of error analysis**

#### **1.4.3.1. Collection of a Sample**

The first point in error analysis is the collection of a sample of learned language. Researchers have identified three broad types of error analysis according to the size of the sample. These types are: massive, specific and incidental samples. All of them are relevant in the corpus collection but the relative utility of each varies according to the main goal.

The first type involves collecting several samples of language use from a large number of learners in order to compile a comprehensive list of errors, representative of the entire population. A specific sample consists of one sample of language used, collected from a limited number of learners.

Finally, an incidental sample uses only one sample of language provided to a single learner. In practice, the most common samples used by researchers are specific and incidental in order to avoid the difficult task of processing, organizing and evaluating the large quantities of samples taken in a massive sample collection.

**1.4.3.2. Identification of Errors**

Once a corpus of learner language has been collected, the errors have to be identified. The identification depends on four crucial questions. The first question is to set up what target language should be used as the point of evaluation for the study.

The second is related to the differences between "errors" and "mistakes or slips" mistake or slip occurs when learners fail to perform to their competence in the target language while error is made when the deviation arises as a result of lack of knowledge.

The third question is about interpretation. There are two kinds of interpretation: overt and covert. The former is easy to identify because there is a clear deviation in form (She sended a letter) and the latter occurs in utterances that are syntactically and semantically well-formed but pragmatically odd (Where do you go?). The fourth question is focused on deviations. There are two kinds of deviation: correctness and appropriateness.

The first is a deviation of the rules of the language usage (I did ate with her) and the other is a deviation of the language use (she can to do whatever she wants).

**1.4.3.3. Description of Errors**

The description of learner errors involves a comparison of the learner's Idiosyncratic utterances with a reconstruction of those utterances in the target language.

Researchers propose that there are two descriptive taxonomies of errors: Linguistic categories and surface strategy.

Linguistic categories are associated with a traditional error analysis undertaken for pedagogic purposes; they can be chosen to correspond closely to those found in structural syllabi and language text books. This type of

description allows a detailed description of specific errors and also for a quantification of a corpus of errors. As Richards (1971) says that, Linguistic categories state that learners' errors were the result of L1 interference.

From another point of view, surface strategy taxonomy highlights the ways in which surface structures are altered by means of such operations as omissions, additions, misinformations and misorderings.

#### **1.4.3.4. Explanation of Errors**

There are two main positions on the source of errors in foreign language learning. One holds that errors are due to interference from the mother tongue. The other, the "creative construction" theory, proposes that the processes used in acquiring a first and a foreign language are identical and that foreign language learners' errors will resemble those of a child learning the language as his mother tongue. A third possibility is that at least some errors can be related neither to L1 interference nor to L2 developmental strategies.

It has been proposed by Corder (1967) that language learners develop inter-language grammars, idiosyncratic dialects or approximate systems, and that errors will not necessarily be based on either the mother tongue or the target language. It wasn't still 1974 that Corder (in Allen & Corder, p. 130) identified three sources of errors: Language Transfer, Overgeneralization or analogy, & Methods or Materials used in the Teaching (teaching-induced error).

Moreover ,James (1998, p. 178) exposed three main diagnosis-based categories of error:

1. Interlingual: interference or language transfer happens when “an item or structure in the second language manifests some degree of difference from, and some degree of similarity with the equivalent item or structure in the learner’s first language” (Jackson, 1987: 101).

2. Intralingual: In 1970, Richards exposed four types and causes for these errors:
  - a. Overgeneralization (p. 174): it is associated with redundancy reduction. It covers instances where the learner creates a deviant structure on the basis of his experience of other structures in the target language. It may be the result of the learner reducing his linguistic burden.
  - b. Ignorance of rule restrictions: i.e. applying rules to contexts to which they do not apply.
  - c. Incomplete application of rules
  - d. Semantic errors such as building false concepts/systems: i.e. faulty comprehension of distinctions in the TL.
3. Induced errors: They “result more from the classroom situation than from either the student’s incomplete competence in English grammar (intralingual errors) or first language interference (inter lingual errors) (Stenson, 1983, p. 256):
  - a. Material induced errors
  - b. Teacher-talk induced errors
  - c. Exercise-based induced errors
  - d. Errors induced by pedagogical priorities
  - e. Look-up errors

Furthermore, in the paper entitled “The Study of Learner English” that Richards and Simpson wrote in 1974, they exposed **seven sources** of errors:

1. Language transfer,

2. Intralingual interference:
3. Sociolinguistic situation: motivation (instrumental or integrative) and settings for language learning (compound or co-ordinate bilingualism) may affect language learning.
4. Modality: modality of exposure to the TL and modality of production.
5. Age: learning capacities vary with age.
6. Successions of approximative systems: since the circumstances of language learning vary from a person to another, so does the acquisition of new lexical, phonological, and syntactic items.
7. Universal hierarchy of difficulty: this factor has received little attention in the literature of 2<sup>nd</sup> language acquisition. It is concerned with the inherent difficulty for man of certain phonological, syntactic, or semantic items or structures. Some forms may be inherently difficult to learn no matter what the background of the learner.

In error analysis, a difficulty arises in trying to assign source of error, especially as many errors seem to have multiple origins. The problems of ascribing errors to different sources have already been mentioned. Even if one can definitely describe an error as due to interference, there may still be difficulties in deciding whether the interference is phonological, syntactic or semantic. Error corrections may be useful in determining the precise form of interference, for instance in deciding between phonological and syntactic origins.

#### **1.4.3.5. Evaluating Errors**

Error evaluation studies proliferated in the late 1970s and in the 1980s, motivated quite explicitly by a desire to improve language pedagogy.

In these studies, judgments were based on three basic categories: comprehensibility, seriousness and naturalness of the grammar and the lexis. In this judgment process, judges have to keep in mind that there are two kinds of errors: global and local. Global error is the error which affects overall sentence organization (my house beautiful red), and local error is the error which affects single elements in a sentence (I need an wet paper).

The evaluation of learner error poses a great number of problems. It is not clear what criteria judges have used when asked to assess the categories of an error. Indeed, error evaluation is influenced by the context in which the errors occurred.

### **1.5. Studies of Arabic L1 Transfer based on CA**

Most linguists, (Lado, 1957; Benathy, Trager and Waddle, 1966& Fries 1972) agree on the fact that the most suitable language teaching material is based on a contrast of the two linguistic systems of L1 and L2. This may include the study of the vocabulary, grammatical, or phonological systems or sub – systems of both languages. The identification of the linguistic differences through a careful comparison of learners' L1 and L2 might lead to a diagnostic analysis of the possible difficulties that learners might encounter in L2 learning situations and predict the kind of errors which appear so often in their writings.

The contrastive analysis hypothesis claims that the problems of any foreign language acquisition are due to the differences that exist between the learner's L1 and L2. A big number of learners tend to repeat the same linguistic errors in their work. Those errors for the strong version of this hypothesis, appear as a result of learners' L1 negative transfer, i.e., learners apply their L1 linguistic rules when learning L2.

Previous literature highlighted the differences between Arabic and English phonology, orthography and punctuation, and grammar in general (e.g., Smith, 2001). Other studies focused on differences in one linguistic branch

such as syntax (e.g. Noor, 1996) while others focus on specific grammatical features such as relatives (e.g., Washali&Hasnain,2013).

The CA this study is based on is that made by (Hemaidia Mohamed, 2016) in his doctoral thesis: ‘ **Algerian Arabic Varieties Speakers ’ Errors in English Writings “A Contrastive Error Analysis Study”** . It was an attempt to explain the concepts which are directly or indirectly related to the notion of error in general and to contrastive and error analysis as two main approaches in the study of learners’ errors , a comparison between the phonological formation of words and syntactic structures in L1 ‘CA’ and L2 ‘English’ was meant to study Arabic and English systems in order to identify similarities and differences between them and check whether or not the structure of L2 has a similar form as that of L1, it indicates the same meaning and similarly distributed in the system of L1 and whether L1 interference is due to the differences that may exist between the two grammatical systems.

To diagnose learners’ deficiencies in writing, a comparison of Arabic and English grammars was under study by (e.g., Hemaidia, 2016) so as to identify the similarities and differences which can be either a source of ease or difficulty in EFL learning.

Brevet section learners at the middle school are then required to produce specific writing genres such as e-mails, letters, reports, biographies... with respect of form and meaning, as well as respecting correct syntax (subject, verb, and object) and using tenses effectively. (4MS teacher guide, p 16, ministry of national education).

However, many experiences have proven that a huge number of those learners face many problems in writing. They can neither create correct sentences by themselves nor gather them to become texts. The different grammatical elements of Arabic and English; their word formation and sentences structure is the main reason behind this problem.

In this paper, the focus is on the differences between some frequent grammatical features that vary from MSA to English and cause learner difficulty. In other words, negative transfer which is defined as “learner difficulty and error” caused by varying “comparable” constructions between two languages (VanPatten & Williams, 2015, p. 20). For example, the absence of the indefinite article in Arabic might influence Arabic learners of English to drop the indefinite article and produce sentences like the following:

- Sarah is reading book.
- Leila bought cat.

### 1.6. Further definitions

Before proceeding, it is essential here to provide further definitions of the two major terms that are used in this paper:

- **Inter lingual/Transfer errors:** those attributed to the native language (NL). There are inter lingual errors when the learner’s L1 habits (patterns, systems or rules) interfere or prevent him/her, to some extent, from acquiring the patterns and rules of the second language (Corder, 1971).
- **Interference (negative transfer)** is the negative influence of the mother language (L1) on the performance of the target language learner (L2) (Lado, 1964). It is ‘those instances of deviation from the norms of either language which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language’ (Weinreich, 1953, p.1).
- The term *inter language*, introduced by Selinker (1972), refers to the systematic knowledge of an L2 which is independent of both the learner’s L1 and the target language. Nemser (1974, p. 55) referred to it as the *Approximate System*, and Corder (1967) as the *Idiosyncratic Dialect or Transitional Competence*.
- **Intra lingual/Developmental errors:** those due to the language being learned (TL), independent of the native language. According to Richards



(1970) they are “items produced by the learner which reflect not the structure of the mother tongue, but generalizations based on partial exposure to the target language. The learner, in this case, tries to “derive the rules behind the data to which he/she has been exposed, and may develop hypotheses that correspond neither to the mother tongue nor to the target language” (Richards, 1970, p. 6).

**Conclusion**

Previous studies has shown that differences between Arabic learners' Mother tongue and English appears to influence some grammatical errors made by Arabic learners of English. The current study is an extension to earlier research. It seeks to investigate L1 transfer in the writings of Arabic learners of English based on CA.

As the studies relating to the process of language transfer and overgeneralization received considerable attention in the literature, the intention in this paper is whether to validate or not the hypothesis:

“ Negative L1 transfer is the major cause for errors in the English writings of BEM pupils” by quantifying each error source made by the learners through error analysis procedure.

The next chapter then is intended to describe the context of our study, the data and the analysis methods.

# **CHAPTER TWO**

## **Methodology**

**Introduction**

This chapter is intended to address the context of the study, the data to be investigated, the discussion of the analysis tools used to investigate the frequency of grammatical errors in the writings of EFL learners and whether L1 transfer is a factor influencing these errors, and learners' attitudes towards it.

**2.1. Context of the study:**

The context of this study is EFL learners at the middle school, Brevet section. Before deciding which type of learners we have to choose to conduct the action research, we went back to our teaching experience where deficiencies in pupils' writing were observed and despite the middle school exit profile suggested by the Algerian ministry of national education is that the learner will be able to produce written messages / texts of average complexity of different types. However, they are still committing basic errors and fail not only to arrange sentences to become texts but cannot even create correct sentences in isolation. The sample population was not chosen randomly but based on previous experiences teaching English at the same district karman , in Tiaret town and through a quantitative study elaborated by a group of teachers attending the same institution who have wondered the same problematic features in question after being interviewed to get more insight into the type of errors learners commit in order to determine the sequence and emphasis of instruction.

Learning about the writing of this population is, therefore, directly relevant to the instructional work of this paper and will help inform it.

Because the findings may be helpful to EFL teachers in identifying causes of errors and understand the role L1 plays in the acquisition of these problematic features, We were inspired to design this paper to examine errors made by Arabic speaking EFL learners at the middle school, brevet section and investigate whether the errors were, in fact, inspired by L1 transfer.

## 2.2. Data description

The most difficult step in data collection is to pick a sample population because it is the first step towards defining limits to study. In this context, Hartas (2010) notes that a population is a group of individuals or organizations that share the same characteristic, he adds that what distinguishes a population is not its size (it may be small or large) but the existence of a particular characteristic.

Moreover, once the individuals are selected, we can identify them as a sample that is a selection or a population subgroup that we intend to study "(Hartas, Idem). It has to be remembered that it is very important for the researcher how the sample is chosen. The sample will also be representative of the entire population.

To begin the task, we were obliged to know the kind of learners to examine and under what circumstances they are learning English that is to say studying all the criteria needed to describe. Thus, we asked an administrator at the level of the subjected school to provide us with the exact number of pupils in the fourth year classes, as well as the areas they come from.

The total number of pupils was ' 200 '. Most of them of them studied English as a foreign language for 4 years at the same middle school. This means our target population contains respondents from the same backgrounds in education. However, outside the classroom, these pupils have very few opportunities to use English. Therefore, they are five brevet section classes of 40 pupils each where they are equally formed in terms of pupils' level, so that picking up one class as a sample would be representative of the entire population.

According to the written survey provided by the administration, the situation of the sample reveals two different social categories : the first includes learners of high educational background , i.e. , most of their parents are of high social status. Therefore, French is well-spoken among these learners . This helps the majority of them to do well with English, as the two languages are genetically related. The second category corresponds to learners living in slums (called 'fawdawi') where a big

number of them come from low educational background and have often financial problems to afford the means for their education. They have problems being late all the time, or being absent for several times.

These two categories helps see to what extent social factors influence language use and learners' attitude to language.

According to the designers of the teacher's guide Middle School Year Four , acquiring writing is the most difficult part of the language learning process , it was essential to first acquire the conventions of written English ( such as capitals, punctuation , indentation...).Next, the learner should be familiar with all the stages which prepare him for the production of a text. In process writing, these stages are: brainstorming, outlining, drafting, re-drafting, editing, and publishing. The learner should be able to assess his work and with the feedback of the teacher he will improve his written production. The latter comes after having presented the learners, in other sessions, with both the writing format and the linguistic tools they need to be equipped with way before they actually put their writing skill to test in the "situation of integration" session . Another tool is additionally supplied in the form of a writing layout whose main function is to make sure they organize their writing materials in accordance with the requirements of the writing situation.

In addition, Teachers have to elicit and generate ideas about writing with their learners, how they write well, why to write and for whom.

In this respect, writing like all other aspects of language, becomes communicative where learners start to think about what they write in real life situations (e-mails, letters, reports, paragraphs, blogs...). All of these writing tasks have a communicative purpose and a target audience.

The cultural component is also omnipresent throughout the courses. According to the curriculum English as a foreign language is used to vehicle national and universal human values, which the learners need so much to be imbued with at this adolescent age while their personality and character are still in construction. Thus, sequence two, for example ,in the yearly learning plan opens up new vistas on human

dreams and prospects, experiences and memories-sometimes painful ones-lived by children in other countries and Algeria ; inviting a tolerant attitude towards other cultures ,but each has to protect their national identity and cultural specificities in today's global world. Accordingly, the latest BEM guide of 2018 maintains that the instruction of the situation of integration should include three sections:

- CONTEXT
- TASK
- SUPPORT

**It should be:**

- A problem solving situation.
- Communicative.
- Significant to the learners.
- Challenging and motivating.
- Complex (integration of different resources).
- Contextualized.

The pupils were provided with the topic “how was your childhood?”. This topic is a socio-cultural situation, learners at that age are even more touched with this phenomenon. The relevance of the topic presupposes pupils interest and involvement in the writing process.

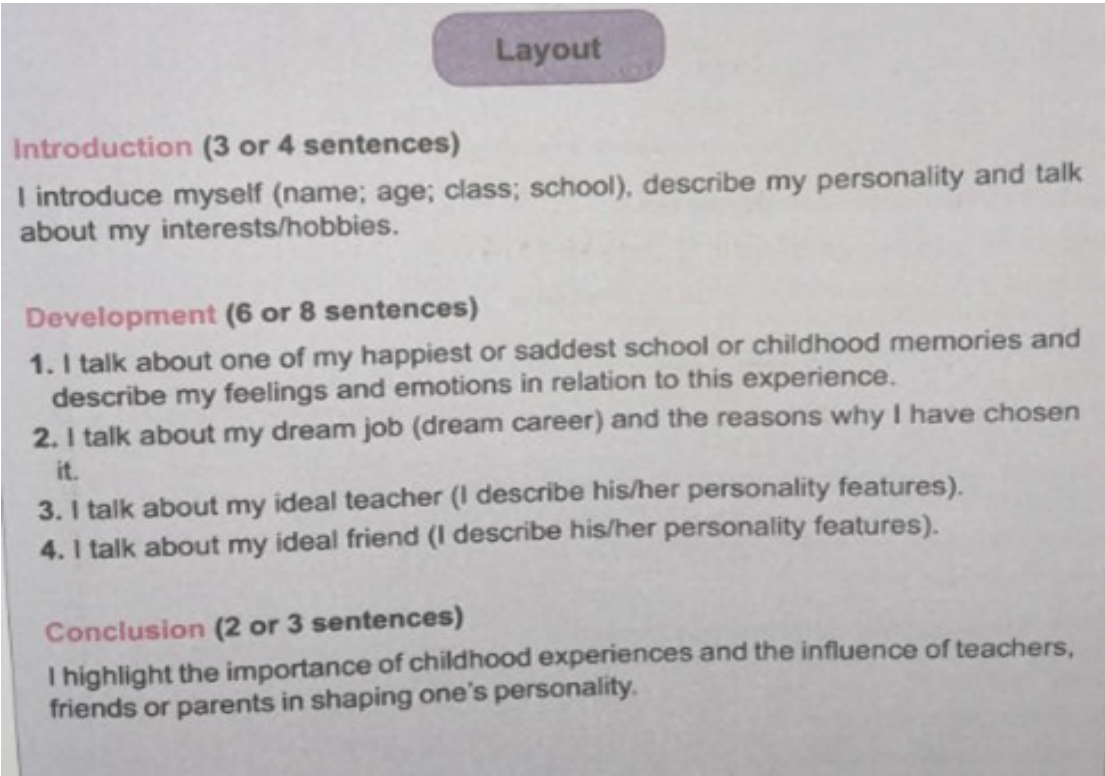
Therefore, they were asked to write a composition of **120words**, the writing task has been semi-guided , they have been asked to write following closely the main steps of paragraph writing. They were given sufficient time to write (Ellis1997,p.114).This was their mid-term Examination at school, in February 2020. Because we were looking at transfer, the first draft( the one realized at the writing session)would be more representative of learners' knowledge as the second draft ( one put under test ) is usually more refined and incorporates revisions based on instructor's feedback.

**Situation of integration**

Your school web magazine is organizing a contest for the top 10 best written profiles in English , and prizes will be given to the winners .the participants are asked to describe their personality and interests ,and talk about their childhood /school memories, their dream job and their ideal teacher and friend. So, you have decided to take part in this contest and win by ranking among the 10 first winners.

Write your profile following the steps mentioned before in a short paragraph of 12 lines to be posted in your school web magazine.

The learners were trained prior to the writing task, to write a well-organized composition following a provided layout.



**Layout**

**Introduction (3 or 4 sentences)**  
I introduce myself (name; age; class; school), describe my personality and talk about my interests/hobbies.

**Development (6 or 8 sentences)**

1. I talk about one of my happiest or saddest school or childhood memories and describe my feelings and emotions in relation to this experience.
2. I talk about my dream job (dream career) and the reasons why I have chosen it.
3. I talk about my ideal teacher (I describe his/her personality features).
4. I talk about my ideal friend (I describe his/her personality features).

**Conclusion (2 or 3 sentences)**  
I highlight the importance of childhood experiences and the influence of teachers, friends or parents in shaping one's personality.

**Figure (N°:02-01):** The layout for the writing task.



**2.3. Analysis procedures****2.3.1. Methods of investigation**

Since this study's main purpose was to evaluate and explain how EFL learners find difficulties in writing, it deemed necessary to use the case study research design .A case study is a tool used to narrow down a very broad field of research into one easily searchable topic "(Shuttleworth, 2008).

In contrast to research design with its broad definition as the complete research scheme or the detailed research plan, study design is used more narrowly, indicating how the study is going to be conducted; the methods of investigation that represent the scientific and methodological conditions for the field research to prove or reject the stated hypotheses. This is made to fit with the results and validation of the research.

Quantitative approaches are typically used to count. In this regard, Thomas (2003: 1) defines quantitative methods as follows: « Quantitative methods, on the other hand, focus attention on measurements and amounts (more and less, larger and smaller, often and seldom, similar and different) of the characteristics displayed by the people and events that the researcher studies » , King, Keohane and Verba (1994) say in that context that quantitative research uses numbers and statistical methods. It appears to be focused on empirical measurements of specific aspects of the phenomena; In other words, quantitative methods help the researcher analyze the first steps by statistical measurements for data collection. Yet without qualitative methods, they are inadequate. Thomas further argues that quantitative methods require the use of statistical methods to provide a general description of the situation at hand, whereas qualitative methods provide a more comprehensive description of event.

It is clear that qualitative approaches require a researcher who explains types of characteristics of individuals and events without comparing events in terms of quantity measurements. Denzin and Lincoln (1999) maintain that qualitative methods are multiple methods involving story- and interview-based study of events. They state that qualitative research is focused on multi-methods, requiring a naturalistic, interpretive

approach to its subject matter. That means qualitative researchers are studying things in their naturalistic sense,[...] Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical case study materials, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional and visual texts.

In short, in any research qualitative and quantitative methods are essential. Cobin (1990 ) explains that idea better. In the same research project, Cobin said both qualitative and quantitative methods can be used effectively. The researcher needs to combine approaches when doing any work, because relying on one approach or technique is not enough.

In this study, we conducted an error analysis procedure; a qualitative descriptive study design. First, to collect the data we applied some quantitative methods such as the use of statistical measurements to provide a general description of the situation at hand and analyze the first steps for data collection in error analysis and next, a written work which will be analysed at the morpho-syntactic level to identify, describe and explain the phenomenon of grammatical errors ,formulate insights about them and gather evidence to confirm or infirm the hypotheses drawn before.

The second method covers an analysis of an interview administrated to 5 teachers from different institutions to highlight possible conclusions on reasons behind learners errors through teachers previous experiences and insights. This is made to fit with the results and validation of the research.

#### **2.3.1.1. Error/Data collection**

For the selection of a corpus of language, following the guidelines offered by Ellis (1995,pp. 51-52) , a sample of a written work was collected from 40 pupils. The sample covers 20% of the total number of brevet section pupils attending the subjected school. The action research which led to this study was based on observations of previous brevet section pupils results that reflect the subjected population deficiencies in the writing skill.

### 2.3.1.2. Error identification and categorization

Referring to the steps of error analysis based on the literature, the data were analyzed as follows:

The first step was to identify errors; in this step, we acquired data and tried to find out the grammatical errors by underlying them. Once the errors had been identified, this step helped us create error categories based on the data that we were analyzing. A taxonomy for errors analysis is developed in this study based on the model work of (Corder 1973; p.256-294, Brown 2000; p.207-235, Ellis 1994; p 47-67, Richards 1974; p 12-22). Accordingly, the identification and classification of learners errors included two broad ways: **intralingual** errors and **interlingual** errors. Including the following categories and sub categories:

**Grammatical** (prepositions, articles, reported speech, singular/plural, adjectives, relative clauses, irregular verbs, tenses, and possessive case), **syntactic** (coordination, sentence structure, nouns and pronouns, and word order), **lexical** (word choice), **semantic, & substance** (mechanics: punctuation & capitalization, and spelling). As for the **organizational/discourse** errors, we will not quantify since, first, it is difficult to do so, and, second, we had trained our pupils, prior to the writing task, to write a well-organized composition.

After setting the categories, then step two where we conducted the quantitative analysis which helped us determine whether grammatical structures were, in fact, problematic for the learners in the sample. Once the errors were calculated, the results of the analysis were arranged. The errors were calculated in order to know how frequent these errors had been made by the learners. Calculating the frequency of each error helps also identify the most frequent error and the least frequent error made by the learners.

The next step in analyzing the written data was to investigate the frequency of L1 errors to that of non-L1 errors to determine which error categories qualified as L1 transfer as predicted by CA and which were non-transfer that did not meet the L1

criteria. Hence, each error category was either categorized as likely caused by L1 transfer based on CA or as a non L1 transfer error.

Here, comes the fourth step where the data are analyzed qualitatively in order to discover the reasons behind committing those grammatical errors, in other words, the error sources that we wanted to study, and they are mainly **Interlingual (negative L1 Transfer) & Intralingual (Developmental)**.

So, the errors were explained in grammatical terms, and thoroughly examined to find their sources, paying particular attention to negative L1 transfer, since we needed to address our research question: “Is negative L1 transfer/interference the major cause for errors in the English writings of Brevet students?”.

**Conclusion**

Being native Arabic speakers, learning and teaching English as a foreign language for several years and based on the Literature and observation, we tried to perceive and pinpoint the errors due to L1 (Arabic) Transfer.

However, there are many differences between Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), which Arabic learners acquire through formal education as opposed to the dialectal varieties that vary from (MSA) and English. These differences might cause learner difficulty. Thus, we should not forget that some errors are caused by interference from standard Arabic and others by interference from colloquial Arabic. L1 transfer then is associated with mental processes; the mere analysis of the written is not enough to decide whether learners consult their L1, consciously or subconsciously, when producing the error.

The last part of this study was, therefore, targeted towards having more insights into what other middle school English teachers from different institutions state as the common causes behind learners' weaknesses in different English writings through teacher's feedback and learners' self assessment while drafting.

# Chapter III

## Results and Discussion

**Introduction:**

This chapter provides and discusses the results of our study; It deals with the investigation of data.

As presented earlier the method of investigation used includes data collection based on observation and data analysis presented in the form of written composition and interviews with teachers.

The first part of the analysis is addressed to the written test, the identification and categorization of errors presented under the form of graphs, and statistic figures. It also state the facts as they are observed and pave the way to possible interpretation in order to verify the research hypotheses provided as answers to suggested research questions. The second part is the analysis of the interview data. This investigation was set to study the data results given by both pupils and teachers.

**3.1. Data collection**

As explained earlier, to collect the data we used statistical measurements to analyze the first steps for data collection.

Out of 40 papers collected from the pupils, we analyzed papers that received a final score of at least 50 % and above to see whether the features investigated were still problematic to this group of learners despite having the language command needed .

Our rationale was that, by eliminating papers that did not get the needed score, we eliminated students who did not truly meet the criterion to have a “good control of the most frequently used target-language syntactic structures” (....., 2018). Including papers that were below 50% might have affected the results greatly, especially if it turned out that most of the errors were made by this group of learners and most of them did not accomplish the writing test but rather copied just the instruction or the support (based on previous observations and studies made by the teachers of English in coordination meetings). These studies results were based on the assessment grid

provided by the ministry of national education on how to correct the situation of integration.

CRITERIA	INDICATORS		
	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
<b>relevance</b> <b>(2pts)</b>	- all the ideas are related to the topic (1pt) - format :correct(1pt) <b>(2pts)</b>	- some ideas are related to the topic (0.5pt) -format: partly correct(0.5pt) <b>(1 pt)</b>	- very little reference to the topic -format: incorrect <b>(0.5 pt)</b>
<b>coherence</b> <b>(01.5 pts)</b>	-ideas are well organized -introduction / topic sentence -four or more supporting sentences -conclusion / closing sentence -all sentences are linked correctly <b>(01.5 pt)</b>	-some ideas are organized -topic sentence / introduction -no closing sentence / no conclusion -two or three supporting sentences -some sentences are linked correctly <b>(01pt)</b>	-ideas are not organized / difficult to follow -no topic sentence/no conclusion -sentences are not linked correctly <b>(0.5pt)</b>
<b>correct use of language</b> <b>(01.5pts)</b>	-correct use of tense -different grammatical items necessary to develop the topic -correct use of linking words - appropriate vocabulary <b>(01.5pts)</b>	-only some verbs are correctly conjugated -use of some grammatical items -use of few linking words -inappropriate vocabulary <b>(01pt)</b>	-incorrect use of tense -incorrect use of grammatical items -no linking words - very limited vocabulary <b>(0,5pt)</b>
<b>excellence</b> <b>( 01 point)</b>	creativity and originality (bright ideas, varied vocabulary items, good paper presentation, legible hand writing .....		

**Figure (N°: 03-01): Situation of integration assessment grid**



### 3.2. Data presentation

As mentioned earlier, the written test was directed to fourth year middle school pupils intended to pass a Brevet Exam. These pupils are asked to write a paragraph of about 12 lines about their profiles and how did their childhood affect their lives. 40 written production papers are collected from the pupils but nearly half of them are not concerned with the study because they did not get the final score of at least 50% and above ( this was based on previous observations and statistical methods ). Thus, the number of papers taken into account is 25.

The corpus of the study is a collection of written composition seen as having errors, which represent learners' variety of the wrong use of written English.

This corpus is both quantitative and qualitative:

First, quantitative in terms of amount of language data , i.e, the number of erroneous items 220 varying between different parts of speech, that constitute its body.

Second, qualitative because it constitutes natural and authentic data to demonstrate how they use language in normal situation, this data is analysed and described in order to draw possible explanations to confirm or infirm the hypothesis that “ interlingual errors are the the main reasons behind learners' errors”

### 3.3. Data treatment and analysis

#### 3.3.1. Written test

##### 3.3.1.1 Error identification and categorisation:

Calculating the frequency of each number of any data treatment helps identifying easily learners' number of errors.

The total number of errors that we found in the 25 paragraphs we studied was 220.

Here they are, in the graph below, divided according to the different Categories:

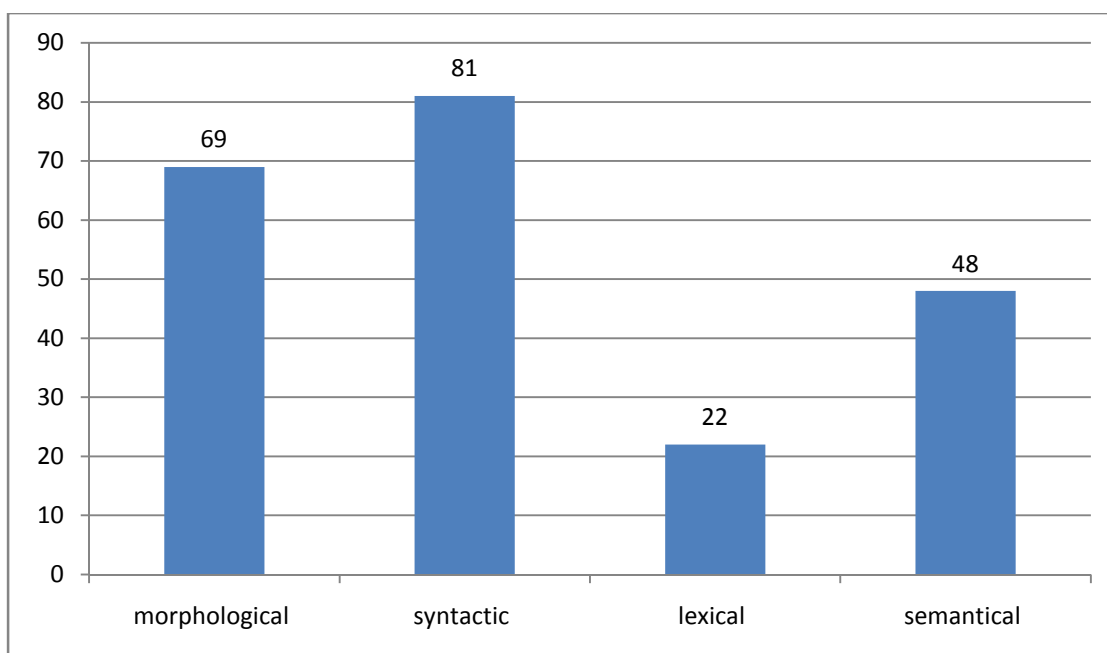


Figure (N°: 03-02): Error categories

Graph number 1 represents pupils' errors categories. The greatest number of errors is that of syntactic errors with 36.81% followed by morphological errors with (31,36% ). That means that pupils generally found difficulties in word formation processes and application of syntactic rules.

Out of the big number of learners' errors, the total number considered in my study as a sample is 220 errors , the errors are divided according to Brown's ( 2000; p 224) classification of sources of errors into 82 transfer errors and 138 developmental errors which are presented in the graph below:

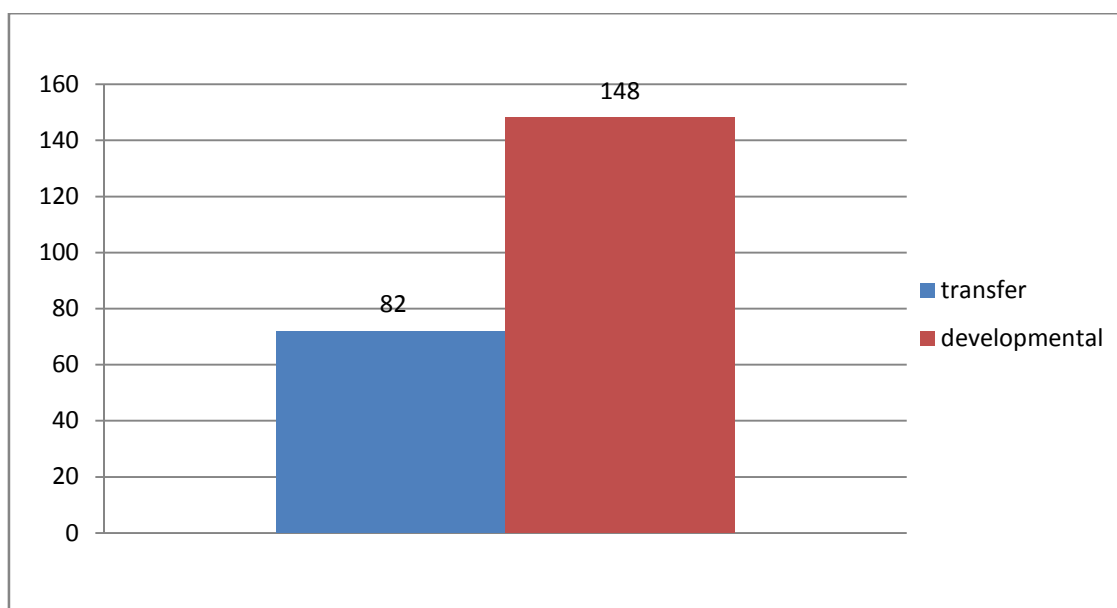


Figure (N°: 03-03): Transfer and developmental errors

Graph 02 represents pupils' errors sources. It shows the number of transfer (72) versus developmental errors (148).

The total percentage of Transfer/Inter lingual errors was 32.72%, whereas the total percentage of Developmental/Intra lingual errors was 67.27%.

Based on this graph we can tell that the highest percentage was that of Intra lingual errors contrary to what is hypothesized that “pupils English writings problems at the middle school may be, to a large extent, attributed to L1 interference from MSA to English”.

The previous classification may touch both the grammatical systems and sub-systems of L2,

**1- Grammatical system** : includes

- a- Morphological errors that touch different word –formation such as verbs, adjectives, adverbs...
- b- Syntactical errors, such as sentence structure, simple sentences, phrases, and fragments...

**2- Lexical errors** (word choice) that cover the vocabulary of L2

- 3- **Semantic errors** which touches the meaning of a word or a sentence. This may also include the mechanics of language such as capitalization and punctuation.

It is worth mentioning that although the focus in this study is put on morpho-syntactic errors, those at the semantic and lexical levels are also counted in this study so as to make a description, a comparison, and then an analysis of the other possible varieties of learners data errors. A number of errors are not considered because they do not fill in the parameters this work is built on. Thus, the number of all errors under study is 220 divided into:

138 Intralingual errors include: morphological errors (51), syntactic errors(45), lexical errors (19) ,and semantic errors (30); while interlingual errors constitute morphological errors (18), syntactic errors (36), lexical errors (03), and semantical errors (18). The latter include both meaning and mechanics of language (capitalization, punctuation, and spelling) for developmental errors, however, transfer errors are concerned only with meaning. These problems have nothing to do with L1 transfer since Arabic spelling is extremely different from English and because of the Lack of capitalization in the Arabic alphabet and its different punctuation conventions; in Arabic “No distinction is made between upper and lower case” (Sofer & Raimes, 2002).

These results are arranged in graph 03 as follows:

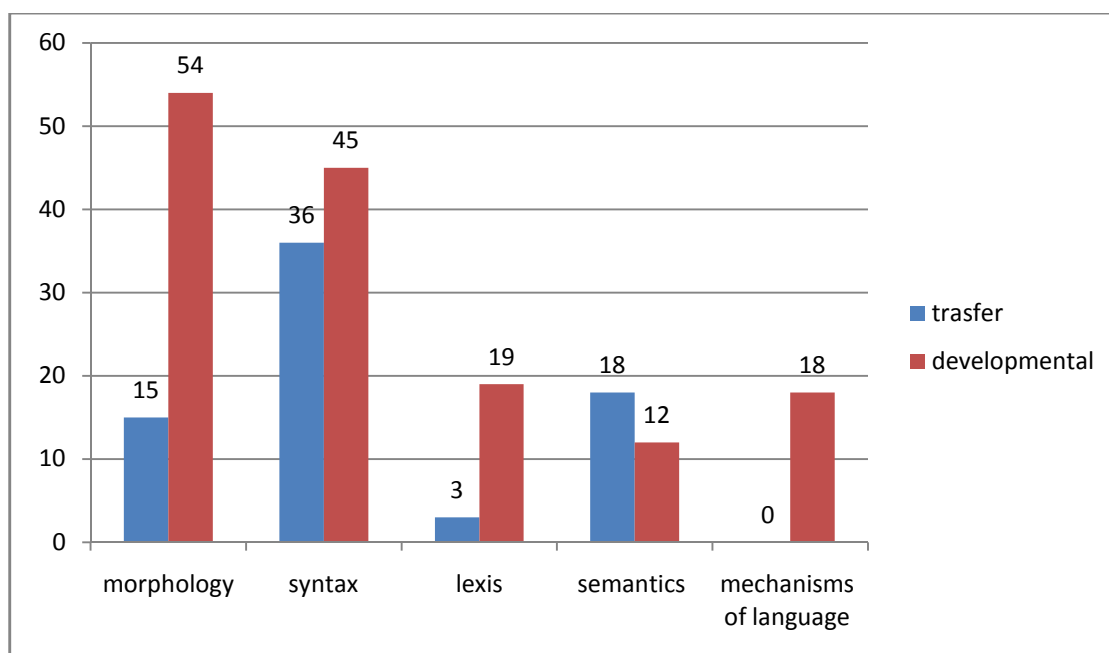


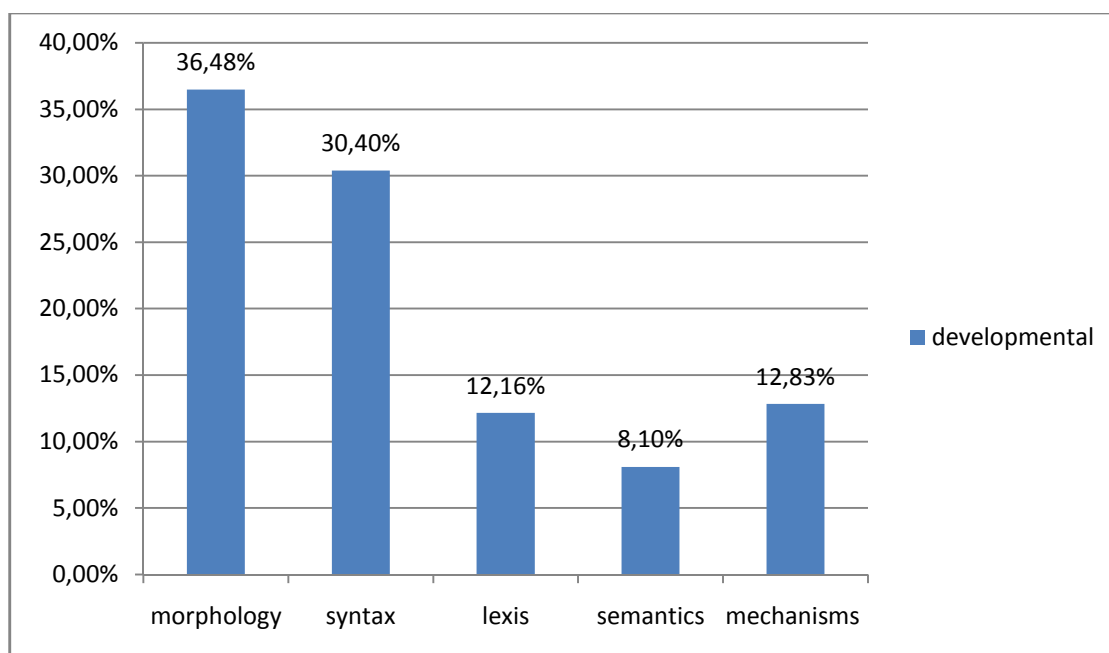
Figure (N°: 03-04): transfer and developmental errors categories .

Graph 3 shows the number of Transfer vs. Developmental errors for each category. Based on this graph we can tell that the highest percentage of Transfer errors was in syntax and Semantics, respectively 50% & 25%. As for the highest percentage of Developmental errors, it was, in morphology 36.48% and syntax 30.40%.

Based on these findings we can tell that Brevet students do commit errors because of Negative L1 transfer, however, their biggest number of errors is due to Developmental/Intra lingual reasons.

The results show clearly that most of learners' errors are committed at the intra lingual level 67.27%. this evidence , as shown in the graph, adds another reality that these errors are within the structure of English itself .

This is illustrated in graph 04 as follows:



**Figure (N°: 03-05): Intra lingual Errors**

Graph 04 shows that the greatest percentage of intra lingual errors is that of morphological errors. It demonstrates that 36.48% of errors present learners' weaknesses in word formation. This includes adjectives, verb tense, singular and plural of nouns, adjectives, demonstratives...30.40% of errors are syntactical, which means that they exist mostly at the level of sentence-word order. 12.83% are lexical errors comprising wrong word-choice, especially, and 12.16% are semantic errors at the level of capitalization and punctuation and 8.10% in the form of meaning deviated from the correct intentional target.

Whereas the greatest percentage of inter lingual errors is that of syntactic errors with 50% followed by semantical errors with 25%. This demonstrates that pupils face most difficulties in sentence structure, order, and meaning because of L1 interference. It is also worth mentioning that acceptable number of errors are morphological due to interference from L1 because of the different inflectional systems of L1 and L2.

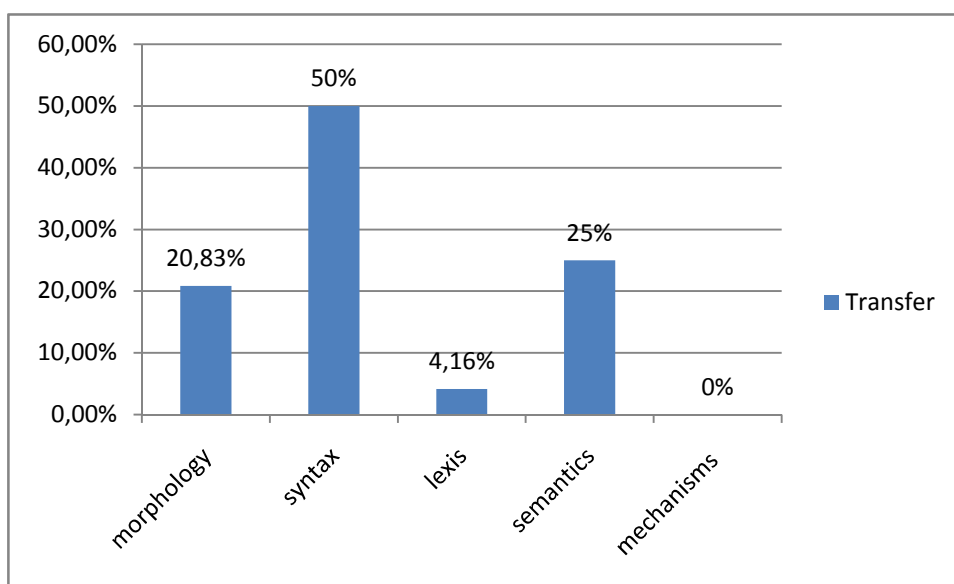


Figure (N°: 03-04): Interlingual Errors

### 3.4.1.2. Samples of learners' errors

In the following sentences, there are samples demonstrating both intralingual and interlingual errors:

#### 3.4.1.2.1. Samples of learners' intralingual errors: referring to each sub-category

##### A) Morphology : number of Errors (51)

Taxonomy of errors	Number of errors
Selection of incorrect elements	14
Omission of required elements	25
Addition of unnecessary elements	12

Table (N°: 03-01): Taxonomy of intra lingual morphological errors

I was not happy because ▼ the lack of entertainment ( preposition)

▼ Most important thing here is that I succeed my brevet exam.( article)

It was my mothers dream (possessive case)

.....I feeled happy. ( irregular verb form )

I have chosen my dream job a long time ago. (wrong tense)

This job is difficult to getting ( ing)

**B ) Syntax: number of errors (45)**

Taxonomy of errors	Number of errors
Selection of incorrect elements	<b>13</b>
Omission of required elements	<b>14</b>
Addition of unnecessary elements	<b>12</b>
Misordering of elements	<b>06</b>

**Table (N°: 03-02): Taxonomy of intralingual syntactical errors**

I have chosen this job because I loved my uncle which was a doctor(relative pronoun)

My first day at school it was happy I was excited to meet new friends

I used ▼ calm and perseverant person ( omission of auxiliary” to be” )

I want to be a doctor because to help people ( extra conjunction)

My first day at school it was happy because I was excited to meet new friends( two subjects)



All my life I've really enjoyed the game and played it all my life ( repetition)

I also have decided to work on.....( word order)

This job was by me chosen. ( faulty passive voice construction)

**C) Lexis (wrong word choice):** number of errors (19)

I deserve that position of an interesting vet.

I will practice on improving my language.

To be a very sensitive person can rise problems and health issues.

**D) Semantics:** number of errors (30)

Taxonomy of errors	Number of errors
meaning	12
punctuation	12
capitalization	6

**Table (N°: 03-03): Taxonomy of intralingual semantical errors**

### **Meaning**

Lower jobs as green grocery and.....

### **Mechanisms of language**

First of all ▼ in order to do that I have to give the sick patients the most appropriate medicine.( punctuation)

Our parents supported us in any activity we choose whether it is Fine Arts, or sports. (capitalization)

#### 3.4.1.2.2. Samples of learners' interlingual errors:

##### A) Morphological errors: number of errors ( 18)

When the good comes ( عندما يأتي الخير ) => use of article in Arabic

I would like to follow in my 's footsteps. ( على خطى أبي )

##### B) Syntactic errors: number of errors( 45)

I have a lot of people in my family who are teachers. (colloquial Arabic)

I have been doing this since a long time ago. ( منذ وقتٍ طويلٍ )

My mother said: You need to respect me and realize how much I love you and how hard I work for you. (repetition of "wa")

##### C) Lexical errors ( wrong word choice)

I have the right health to do so. ( الصّحة الجيّدة )

**D) Semantical errors:** number of errors ( 18) concerning only meaning (Literal translation)

When I secure a job, i will help my family. ( عندما أوّمن عملا )

When my mother was pregnant with me . ( عندما كانت امي حاملا بي )

#### 3.4.2. Teacher's interview

The interview was directed to 5 teachers from different institutions of the same district. All of them are trainer teachers.

In this interview, teachers were requested to provide information about their attitudes on the main reasons behind learners weaknesses in English writings in order

to confirm or not the hypothesis that “L1 transfer was the major cause behind L2 weaknesses that learners face” .This was also meant to address the socio-cultural and educational context where pupils learn to write and whether it may have a negative effect on their writing competence.

These were the three major factors that were apparent in the interviews subdivided into different questions:

- Teachers’ attitudes towards the main reasons behind learners’ weaknesses in English writings mainly learners’ transfer habits.
- Pupils attitudes towards English language learning in general and writing in particular.
- The last part of the interview concerns teachers’ opinion about the time devoted for writing skill and if this may affect learners’ weaknesses.

### **3.5. Results discussion**

#### **3.5.1. Written test:**

The errors committed by learners as shown in graph 02 p 29 reveal that most of them are intralingual, while the ones caused by L1 interference are of similar proportion and are due to learners’ faulty overgeneralization about TL; Incomplete application of rules or ignorance of rules restriction. learners usually make errors by selecting the incorrect elements, omitting required elements, adding unnecessary elements, this includes the wrong use of articles, prepositions, possessive case, and both inflection and derivation forms of words such as those in adjectives, adverbs, verb tense, and singular and plural forms of nouns.

Other errors are spotted in learners papers as results of the ignorance of some rules of L2 structures, this can be illustrated in their misordering of words in sentences.the incorrect use of relative pronouns, passive form construction. The results also show evidence of high frequency L1 interlingual syntactic transfer as a result of learners limited linguistic knowledge.

Lexical and semantic errors also result from the wrong choice of appropriate words in convenient contexts. This is mostly demonstrated in the substitution of a word from another, literal translations from L1 to L2. The incorrect punctuation and capitalization are also found in learners' papers. This very often makes their written productions in comprehensible.

### **3.5.2. Teachers' interview:**

Teachers' interview results show that teachers agree upon the fact transfer habits affect greatly pupils' weaknesses because most of them use direct translation from L1 to L2. Their reliance on L1 to write in English is an important factor for possible sources of pupils errors. However, the largest amount of errors is due to developmental errors within the TL itself.

Teachers also put the stress on the idea that both teachers and pupils have modest use of mother tongue of Arabic in English classes, this is due to poor pupils' linguistic background and lack of materials (technology).

In this regard, pupils' personal desire and lack of motivation affect their interest in learning the language in general. Besides their limited vocabulary and the big number of syntactic rules they have to master, pupils find the writing activity very difficult to tackle.

Therefore, concerning their view of adequacy of the new designed programme, the majority of teachers see that it is adequate to the drawn objectives and present too much about the culture of the target language, however, the context where pupils learn to write is totally different.

In the last rubric, when asked about the time devoted for writing skill, as said by the majority of teachers, is insufficient to improve learners competence.

**Conclusion**

This chapter is meant to diagnose learners' errors in English writings and the possible reasons behind them. For this purpose, two methods of investigation are used to study the possible factors affecting learners deficiencies in writing: an analysis of a written test and an interview devoted to teachers' attitudes towards learners writing deficiencies to gather evidence about the kinds of errors these pupils commit and the possible reasons behind. The conclusions can be drawn as follows:

Firstly, when we analysed the errors as a first method of investigation. This analysis makes evidence of learners' inability to write correctly their L2 without breaking the correct form of words (36,48%) or the structure of sentences (30,40%) . Along with semantical and lexical errors, intralingual errors covers (76%) of errors learners make as a result of their ignorance of a rule restriction of L2 or their limited vocabulary, but still is the mother tongue interference one of the main sources of errors(32,72%). although the findings confirm the hypothesis that the L1 interference is due to the differences that may exist between the grammatical systems of L1 and L2, they reject the idea that it is the principal cause of learners' errors in writing.

Secondly, the data given by teachers indicate clearly that several elements interfere to stand as obstacles towards learners' writing in English: their limited English vocabulary background and control of the most frequently used target-language syntactic structures, learners negative transfer from L1, and lack of opportunities to practice English as well as the unnatural surroundings where this language is taught.

# **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

## General conclusion

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In the previous chapters, we reviewed the literature on the effect of L1 transfer in influencing errors made by Arabic L1 learners of English. We also explained the goals of our study and the methods we used to investigate the influence of L1 transfer in the production of errors as well as teachers' attitudes towards learners' transfer habits. Then, we presented the results of our analyses. In this section, we review our research goals and provide a summary of our findings, and then discuss pedagogical implications and limitations of our study.

In the final part of this section, we offer suggestions for future research on Arabic learners' L1 transfer.

### **Research questions and summary of findings:**

Our study was directed towards investigating the effect of L1 transfer on Arabic Algerian middle school learners writing errors at the middle school of Ben Aichouch Mohammed , city of karman , town of Tiaret, and the possible reasons behind these errors. The attempt to identify, describe, categorize, and diagnose these errors is undertaken by means of empirical study through the error analysis approach as the second goal was to investigate the influence of L1 transfer as teachers perceived it to answer our research questions.

The main question that our research paper addressed was :

**“Is negative L1 transfer/interference the major cause for errors in the English writings of Brevet pupils ?”**

In order to answer our main research question, we have analyzed papers written by the subjected group of learners. This work was initiated with theoretical review to explain the concepts which are directly related to the notion of error in general and contrastive and error analysis as two main approaches to the study of learners' errors.

Several contrastive analyses were done to compare between the phonological formation of words and syntactic structures in L1 'CA' and L2 'English'. It was meant to study Arabic and English systems in order to identify similarities and differences

## General conclusion

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between them and check whether L1 interference is due to the differences that may exist between the grammatical systems of Arabic and English. The contrastive study followed in this research paper was that of (Hemaidia, 2016), where the comparison made shows clearly that despite the common points shared in the two language systems there also exist many points that differ significantly in form, in meaning and in the distribution of syntactic structures. In this light, pupils' errors are attributed either to L1 interference or to the target language itself.

As the first method of investigation confirm, the two types of errors are clearly seen in learners' written tests, however, intralingual errors covers (76%) of errors learners make as a result of their ignorance of a rule restriction of L2 or their limited vocabulary, but still is the mother tongue interference one of the main sources of errors(32,72%). Although the findings confirm that the L1 interference is due to the differences that may exist between the grammatical systems of L1 and L2, they reject the idea that it is the principal cause of learners' errors in writing. They also confirm that there are other kinds of errors resulting from learners' faulty or partial learning of L2 as having a negative effect on their writing performance.

Just as George (1972), Lance (1969), Richards (1971), and Brudhi prabha (1972) found that only one-third of the second language learners errors can be attributed to NL language transfer, this is what this study came up with. Most of the errors are caused either by an overapplication or incomplete application of L2 rules. Thus, contrary to what is hypothesised in this study, the majority of errors are not attributed to L1 interference. However, they are attributed to faulty inferences about the TL.

The second method includes a teachers' interview on the possible reasons behind learners' weaknesses. The main points of discussion fall into confirming the previous findings besides the socio-cultural and educational contexts where pupils learn to write as factors affecting their writing performance , the simple reason that CA and English do not represent the same social and cultural settings.



## General conclusion

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### **Pedagogical Implications and Applications**

Brevet learners are, according to this study, facing two kinds of problems in essay writing: Translation from Arabic, their mother tongue and Incomplete or faulty learning of L2 rules. What should we, teachers, do then?

First, it would be very useful to increase the number of assignments for the sake of which the students would have to do a lot of research during their free time, hence they would be reading a lot of English material and thinking in English, especially if they have to make oral presentations for their work.

Instructors could also direct learners towards extracurricular resources such as textbooks, cellular phone and computer applications that help them practice and improve their grammar skills.

Many language acquisition theorists have discussed the importance of exposure to the L2 over time and have acknowledged the fact that the teacher cannot provide all the exposure that a learner's needs. One of the language instructor's priorities should be to present learners with opportunities that maximize their exposure to the target language outside of the classroom and encourage autonomous learning. Exposure to English helps developing intuition for grammaticality and learning not to transfer features if they were ungrammatical in English.

In addition, if we implement Team Work in class and we get the learners to work in groups on their projects, they would have to practice together for their oral presentations, and speak English with each other instead of Arabic. Besides, they would, hopefully, correct each other's mistakes.

Finally, as a former advocate of "Do not think in Arabic" I feel obliged to acknowledge its lack of applicability. Providing students with such a vague instruction does not help them eliminate or even mitigate the effect of their L1 on their production of L2. While the ultimate goal is to have learners display native-like

## General conclusion

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grammar performance, instructing students to stop thinking in their L1 clearly did not help them think in English. On the contrary, it created some kind of inner resistance. Teachers should avoid associating students' L1 with negative effects. They should provide their learners with concrete examples from learners' own writing to help demonstrate the effect of their L1. This way, students will know what type of errors to look for when editing and proofreading their papers.

Hence, identifying sources of learners' error either by teacher-conducted EA or through consulting the CA-informed EA literature and preparing CA-informed materials might help minimize L1.

In brief, we definitely have to adapt ourselves and our curriculum to their needs. According to (Hemaidia,2016 , p 331)

*“there is evidence that whatever kind of writing problems learners face, they can succeed especially if the instructions they receive are appropriate to their learning level”*

### Limitations and Future Research

*“It has already been noted that learners often appear inconsistent in their production of errors” (Corder, 1974, p. 131).*

We need to keep this fact in mind when conducting an error analysis and reaching conclusions on which we would base our teaching because most of the time, it is difficult to decide on the source of errors because of their ambiguity.

Besides, this study was conducted on a small number of students, and also on a very limited number of essays. Therefore, the conclusions reached are less decisive. While the results provide useful insights, the sample cannot be taken as being representative of all fourth year middle school pupils.

Thus, We consider this study a preliminary one. It should set the pace for other studies which would be much more representative, covering a bigger number of learners and a wider range of materials.

## General conclusion

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*“The recognition of error ... depends crucially upon the analyst making a correct interpretation of the learner’s intended meaning of the context” (Corder, 1974, p. 127).*

In this regard, further studies are needed to move beyond studies of grammar. It may be undertaken to investigate both intralingual and interlingual errors in terms of those related not only to the grammatical systems of L1 and L2, but also to other systems of language such as semantics and pragmatics.

**“Humans are prone not only to commit language errors themselves but also to err in their judgements of those errors committed by others” (James, 1998, p. 204).**

**We need to be careful when conducting an error analysis study.**

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# **APPENDICES**

# Appendices

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## Appendix 1:

### Arabic: General Language Characteristics

The Arabic language is one of the world's most widely used languages. According to Egyptian Demographic Center (2000), it is the mother tongue of about 300 million people. Arabic is the official language of many Arab nations in the Middle East and northern Africa, including Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen (Sofer & Raimes, 2002 & World Book Encyclopedia, 1997). It is one of the six official languages of the United Nations.

There are two types of Arabic, spoken and written. Spoken Arabic consists of dialects. Arabic is the descendant of the language of the Koran, the sacred book of the Islamic religion. The orientation of writing is from right-to-left, and the Arabic alphabet consists of 28 letters. The Arabic alphabet can be extended to ninety elements by writing additional shapes, marks, and vowels (Tayli & Al-Salamah, 1990). Most Arabic words are morphologically derived from a list of roots; it can be tri-, quad-, or pent-literal. Most of these roots are three constants. Arabic words are classified into three main parts of speech: nouns (adjectives, and adverbs), verbs, and particles. In formal writing, Arabic sentences are delimited by commas and periods as in English, for instance. Many English words come from Arabic: alcohol, algebra, check, magazine, and tariff.

Standard Arabic: is the formal language of literature and written expression. Colloquial Arabic: is the ordinary familiar language used in everyday conversation among Arabic speakers.

When discussing MTI from Arabic it should not be forgotten that some errors are caused by interference from standard and others by interference from colloquial Arabic.

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## Appendix 2

### Error Analysis: Scope of Study

#### Error Categories & Sources

Error Category	Error Sources	Error Sources / Abbreviations
<b>Grammatical Errors</b>	<b>A- INTERLINGUAL:</b>  L1 (negative) Transfer / interference	<b>InterL/LIT</b>
	<b>B- INTRALINGUAL:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="528 869 1061 1025"> <input type="checkbox"/> Developmental/ analogical errors [Corder, 1974; p. 130] or over-generalization or of TL rules (Selinker, 1972 in Richards, 1974) = redundancy reduction (Richards, 1974; p 175)           </li> <li data-bbox="528 1059 1061 1093"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorance of rule restrictions           </li> <li data-bbox="528 1126 1061 1283"> <input type="checkbox"/> Incomplete application of rules = under-generalization             e.g. nobody knew where was Barbie (Richards + James, 1998; p 185)           </li> <li data-bbox="528 1317 1061 1384"> <input type="checkbox"/> Building of false concepts/systems (Richards, p 174)           </li> <li data-bbox="528 1417 1061 1507"> <input type="checkbox"/> Morphology =&gt; 3<sup>rd</sup> pers sing “s”, “ed”, “ing” &lt;=&gt; Concord + Phonological error (James p 154)           </li> <li data-bbox="528 1541 1061 1574"> <input type="checkbox"/> False analogy =&gt; childs (James p 185)           </li> <li data-bbox="528 1608 1061 1888"> <input type="checkbox"/> Induced errors (James p 178): from classroom situations           <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="627 1720 1061 1753">1. cross-association</li> <li data-bbox="627 1787 1061 1821">2. teacher explanation</li> <li data-bbox="627 1854 1061 1888">3. material induced errors</li> </ol> </li> <li data-bbox="528 1921 1061 1989"> <input type="checkbox"/> Omissions/avoidance because of ignorance (James p 176)           </li> </ul>	<b>IntraL</b>  <b>Dev</b>  <b>OG</b>  <b>Ign</b>  <b>IncompR/</b>  <b>UG</b>  <b>FC</b>  <b>Mor</b>  <b>Concord</b>

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	<p><b>C- AMBIGUOUS:</b></p> <p>Both interlingual/interference and intralingual/developmental</p>	<p><b>Phono</b></p> <p><b>FA</b></p> <p><b>IE</b></p>
	<p><b>D- UNIQUE:</b></p> <p>Neither interlingual nor intralingual &lt;=&gt; not in L1 and not developmental (Richards p 115- Dulay &amp; Burt)</p>	<p><b>CAss</b></p> <p><b>TE</b></p> <p><b>Mat</b></p> <p><b>Om/Av</b></p> <p><b>Amb</b></p> <p><b>Un</b></p>
	<p><b>A- INTERLINGUAL:</b></p> <p>L1 (negative) Transfer / interference</p>	<p><b>InterL/L1T</b></p> <p><b>IntraL</b></p> <p><b>Missel / Misord</b></p>
<p><b>Syntactic errors</b></p>	<p><b>B- INTRALINGUAL:</b> (James p 157)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Phrase structure errors = Misselection / Misordering</li> <li>2. Clause errors = Omitted, Misordered, Misselected, Blend</li> <li>3. Sentence errors = Discourse &lt;=&gt; Coherence</li> <li>4. Intersentence errors = Cohesion</li> </ol>	<p><b>Om</b></p> <p><b>BL</b></p> <p><b>Cohr</b></p> <p><b>Cohs</b></p>
<p><b>Lexical</b></p> <p><b>Errors</b></p> <p><b>(word choice)</b></p>	<p><b>A- INTERLINGUAL:</b></p> <p>L1 (negative) Transfer / interference &lt;=&gt; False friends / Deceptive Cognates</p>	<p><b>InterL/L1T</b></p> <p><b>FF / DC</b></p>
	<p><b>B- INTRALINGUAL/Developmental:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Confusables (James p. 145-147)</li> <li>2. Distortions - form nonexistent in TL (James p 150)</li> </ol>	<p><b>IntraL/Dev</b></p> <p><b>Conf</b></p> <p><b>Dist</b></p>

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<b>Semantic errors</b>	<p><b>INTERLINGUAL:</b></p> <p>L1 (negative) Transfer / interference</p>	<b>InterL/LIT</b>
<p><b>Organization</b> (claim/thesis, transition words (TW), support, process, logical progression, flow of ideas)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">+</p> <p><b>Discourse/Process</b></p>	<p><b>A- INTERLINGUAL:</b></p> <p>L1 (negative) Transfer / interference</p> <p><b>B- INTRALINGUAL / Developmental:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Relevance, clarity, development, originality (James p 161)</li> <li>2. Coherence/content = value as a message</li> <li>3. Cohesion = value as a text/product (Das, 1878; in James p 161)</li> </ol>	<p><b>InterL/LIT</b></p> <p><b>IntraL/Dev</b></p> <p><b>Rel/CI/Dev</b></p> <p><b>Orig</b></p> <p><b>Cohr</b></p> <p><b>Cohs</b></p>
<p><b>Substance</b> (Mechanics + Spelling)</p>	<p><b>A- INTERLINGUAL:</b></p> <p>L1 (negative) Transfer / interference</p> <p><b>B- INTRALINGUAL / Developmental</b></p>	<p><b>InterL/LIT</b></p> <p><b>IntraL/Dev</b></p>
	<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Pronunciation:</b> sound spelling, unnecessary letters</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Convention of spelling:</b> omissions, inversion, letter shape (Corder p 138)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Dyslexic errors, phonetic near-misses</b> (e.g. course/coarse), confusables, typographic errors (James p 130)</p>	<p><b>SdSp</b></p> <p><b>UL</b></p> <p><b>SpConv</b></p> <p><b>Om/Inv/LS</b></p> <p><b>Dys/ Conf/ Typo</b>      <b>PhNM</b></p>

**Sources:** Corder, 1974; Richards, 1974; James, 1998; Selinker, 1972 in Richards, 1974; Richards & Sampson, 1974.