CHAPTER ONE

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1.1 Overview

The history of the teaching and learning of foreign/second languages is traced back to several centuries. It has been a topic of considerable interest to linguists for several centuries. Charles Fries (1945) is the pioneer in this regard whose work on the teaching of English as a second language is considered to have provided the initial motion that eventually led to new teaching methodologies and the incorporation of linguistics insights into second/foreign language teaching materials. With the rise of generative transformational linguistics (Chomsky 1957, 1965) a new interest in language universals came up including the universal ability to learn a language. These new theories in linguistics and psychology inspired the research on second language acquisition which has emerged as a vital area of linguistic investigation (Corder 1967; George 1972: Richards 1971, etc.).

Throughout this investigation is the analysis of errors made by language learners since they represent the most significant data on which a reconstruction of the knowledge possessed by the learner could be made. A language user possesses a set of cognitive structures acquired by some procedures of data processing and hypothesis formation in which the making of errors is evidence of
the learning process itself. The identification and explanation of errors are an attempt to develop and to provide a better understanding of a more comprehensive theory of second/foreign language learning, which in turn provides teachers with new insights into appropriate teaching methods and materials to facilitate the process of language acquisition.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Most Yemeni secondary school students commit errors and face difficulties in the areas of syntax, semantics, orthography, punctuation and capitalization. As far as grammar is concerned, for instance, the structural syntax is one of these difficulties which attempts to describe the ways in which words can be put together in well-formed constructions up to the level of the sentence. In addition, the linguistic interference according to this study represents the second problem that faces Yemeni learners of English. It is believed that the linguistic interference from the native (mother tongue) language to the second or foreign language represents the source of errors. Therefore, the researcher assumes that Yemeni learners face many difficulties in learning English with a particular reference to syntactic structures.

The differences in the grammatical and syntactical structures between Arabic and English will be a source of difficulty for Yemeni learners. The plural process in Arabic, for instance, is by putting the plural marks for the noun and the verb, but in English,
the (plural-s) is put for the noun only. Therefore, it is predicted that Yemeni learners may put the (plural-s) for the verb even if it is preceded by a plural noun. The following examples will make it clear:

Some YELs would say 'The pupils plays.' instead of saying 'The pupils play.'; and also they may say 'The pupil play.' instead of saying 'The pupil plays.'

1.3 Purpose, Scope and Limitation of the Study

The purpose and scope of this research is to investigate the sources of common errors in the written English committed by Yemeni Secondary School Students. It can be observed that most Yemeni learners of English as a foreign language find it quite difficult to convey their ideas in written forms. At the same time, Yemeni teachers of English find it difficult to teach writing skill because it seems to be so complex, and they are frequently discouraged by the results they achieve.

It could be said that most of the errors committed by Yemeni learners of English are due to the mother tongue interference. Thus, it is common for a Yemeni student even after studying English for some years to be unable to carry on a simple conversation or write a short paragraph without making many serious grammatical, semantic, orthographic, punctuation and capitalization errors. These
errors result from transferring Arabic structures into English or incomplete mastery of the target language.

In addition, English language deviations are sometimes formed in the classroom depending on textbooks alone, insufficient use of learning/teaching materials and selection of proper lexical items. Moreover, most of the teachers are not qualified and the absence of teacher training programmes contributes in the difficulties that Yemeni learners face while learning English. What is more is the failure of language policy and planning programmes in Yemen as an important factor which is responsible for inadequate language learning.

As in earlier studies of Error Analysis (e.g., Corder 1967; Burt & Kiparsky 1972; Selinker 1972; Richards 1974; Burt & Dulay 1974), it is assumed that the language learners' errors represent an important body of data on the basis of which the learners' strategies can be ascertained. The researcher's experience as a learner and a teacher of English as a foreign language has shown that an analysis of errors committed by students can provide a guide for establishing a proper approach and selecting relevant materials required to improve teaching strategies and classroom techniques, in general, and writing courses, in particular.
In this respect, Corder (1974:126) states that, "We should be aware that different types of written material may produce a different distribution of error or a different set of error types".

"The recognition of error ... depends crucially upon the analyst making a correct interpretation of the learner's intended meaning of the context", (See, Corder, 1974).

It should be borne in mind that inconsistent errors may be produced by EFL learners, to quote Corder's words (1974:131) "It has already been noted that learners often appear inconsistent in their production of errors".

We need to keep all these facts in mind when conducting an error analysis and reaching conclusions on which we would base all our teaching. In addition, this study was conducted on a limited number of Yemeni secondary school students in some cities of Yemen.

1.3.1 Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this research are:

1. To identify the common difficulties and errors made by Yemeni secondary school students in the English writings.
2. To find out the sources of these common errors in the written English of Yemeni secondary school students.
3. To provide explanations for these specific problematic areas of learning English as a foreign language.
4. To make some recommendations for improving the English education programmes in Yemen.

1.3.2 Research Questions

To achieve the objectives of the current study, the following two questions were posed:

1. What are the syntactic, semantic, orthographic, punctuation and capitalization difficulties that face Yemeni secondary school students in the written English?
2. What are the sources of common errors in the written English of Yemeni secondary school students?

1.3.3. Research Hypotheses

1. There are many syntactic, semantic, orthographic, punctuation and capitalization difficulties that face Yemeni learners of English.
2. Mother tongue interference is the only source of these difficulties.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The study of students' errors in L2 learning such as in this case in Yemen has both theoretical and practical implications.
The researcher believes that the findings of this research would provide the decision makers, English language education planners, curriculum designers and teachers of Yemeni learners of English, in particular, and researchers of foreign language learning and teaching, in general, with the urgent information for the sake of developing and improving the current situation of English language programmes being taught in Yemen.

Moreover, in Yemen, empirical researches regarding student performance at different levels of learning is not only rare but also urgently needed. On top of the concerns that are particular to Yemenis, it is intended that this study would be of value in increasing our knowledge in the field of L2 acquisition.

1.5 The Mother Tongue of the Subjects

1.5.1 Arabic Language

Arabic is one of the world's major languages, spoken in a broad belt extending from the Arabian Peninsula across the Fertile Crescent and on to the Atlantic Ocean.

It is a language of rich culture and civilization dating back to many centuries. It was the language of ancient Arabs. It belongs to the Semitic family of languages. Thus it is one of the most widely known languages of the world used by Arabs and speakers of other languages. It is the language in which the Holy Qurān was revealed, so non-Arab Muslims worldwide regard it as their second
language. More than twenty countries have Arabic as their official language and it is the native language of more than two hundred million people; that is, it is used by almost more than 25 percent of the world’s population, living in more than sixty countries. Hence, it is spoken as Far East as India and as Far West as Spain.

Arabic is written from right to left similar to other Semitic languages. The script is employed in many other languages, such as Persian, Urdu, Sindhi, etc. Arabic has influenced many languages. For example, it has contributed many words to the English language; many of them begin with the Arabic definite article al- ‘the’, such as algebra, alcohol, alcove, albatross, etc. There are also other words being used in English like mosque, minaret, sultan, elixir, harem, giraffe, gazelle, cotton, amber, sofa, mattress, tariff, magazine, syrup, sherbet, artichoke, etc. The United Nations has adopted Arabic as one of its official languages since January 1974.

It is well known that Arabic is one of the oldest languages in the history. It is a very complicated language that has not been changed during the history like the other languages. Even though there are different dialects and accents in Arabic, the standard Arabic remains the same. Most educated Arabic speakers can communicate with the standard Arabic.
1.5.1.1 Arabic as an Official Language

Arabic is the official language of Yemen and the mother tongue of more than 20 million inhabitants of the country.

As the language of Islam (the religion of the large majority of Yemenis), the vehicle of the historic glories of Islamic civilization, and a potent force for unity throughout the Arab World. Arabic is the language of law, commerce, politics, education, administration, and of culture at all levels in Yemen. The medium of instruction is Arabic except when there is a specific need to teach a subject in a foreign language (which in this case is English).

As is common among languages magnificent with a long literary tradition, there are two forms of Arabic: The standard form, i.e. High Variety, used for formal and literary purposes and the dialectal form, i.e. Low Variety, spoken by all the people and used in the affairs of everyday life. Standard Arabic is taught in both public and most of the private schools and only the educated sector of the population can use it accurately and appropriately. It is the language used for intellectual discourse and contact with different vernaculars. Moreover, Arabic is the language of wider communication throughout the Arab world, the language of mass media, books, newspapers, and formal talks and lectures. Hence, it is the standard language which is the most useful in acquiring as adequate knowledge of a local dialect wherever it is spoken.
1.5.1.2 Classification of Arabic

Arabic might be classified into three groups: Classical Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic and Dialectal Arabic.

(a) **Standard Arabic (S A)**

Many writers, especially non-Arabs, think that Classical Arabic is distinct from Standard Arabic. In fact, both terms have the same sense, i.e. \(\text{al-fuḍhaa} \) ‘the pure’, to most of native speakers of Arabic. Moreover, they are not distinct from each other in linguistic features; thereby, they can be interchangeable. Thus, Standard Arabic (or Classical Arabic) is mostly known as the Arabic of:

- the Pre-Islamic Poetry;
- the Holy Qur\(\textrm{ā}n\); and
- the Classical Literature of the Golden Age.

It can be traced back to that branch of Semitic languages called Northern Arabic. Many historians have considered it as the youngest and most powerful branch of Semitic languages. However, it is still the core of much literature until date. Thus, S A has remained largely unchanged since the 7th century. Besides, it serves as a great unifying force in the development and standardization of the language. As a matter of fact, most students are amazed at the easy transition between reading a modern novel and a chapter of the Qur\(\textrm{ā}n\) (See Tore, 1999; and Kaye in Comrie, 1987).
(b) **Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)**

There is a standard language commonly referred to as MSA, which is ascendant of SA, due to various colloquial dialects in the Arab World which vary not only from country to country and town to town, but even from village to village and hamlet to hamlet. Other names, in use for the term MSA, are contemporary Arabic, contemporary Standard Arabic, Modern Literary Arabic, and so on.

As a matter of fact, MSA is the direct descendent of the SA. The major differences are in lexicon and style. As Fischer (1992: 91) puts it, "**MSA differs from CA (i.e. Classical Arabic) only in vocabulary and stylistic features; the morphology and the basic syntactic norms have remained unchanged**" (See, Beeston, 1970).

MSA is used almost exclusively in any printed publication anywhere in the world today. It is also used in formal occasions, in schools and universities and other various situations ranging from news broadcasts to less formal speeches, discussions, debates, etc.

Most educated Arabic speakers can communicate with the MSA. According to Holes et al. (1995:60), "To many Arabs, MSA known as **al-fushaa ‘the pure’** is the only form of the language which has any worth. The dialects, although they are the universal means of everyday conversation, are regarded by many as degraded forms of the language". Thus certain individuals use the MSA as their exclusive means of oral communication. In short, MSA is a
universal form of Arabic learned in schools across the Arab World; it is opposed to dialectal or colloquial Arabic.

(c) **Dialectal Arabic (DA)**

Dialectal Arabic or colloquial Arabic is a mixed form with variations. Arabs normally do not separate their own dialects from MSA but they mix them according to the degree of understanding. The differences between MSA and DA are mainly in phonology and morphology. The most prominent matter is the deletion of MSA inflections, such as case markers, dual forms for pronouns, and verbs, etc.

**1.5.1.3 Varieties of Arabic**

According to W. Marqais (1930) and C.A. Ferguson (1959), Arabic can be divided into two varieties; that is, High Variety and Low Variety. The former refers to the standard variety used in formal situations: at religious places, official occasions, etc and the latter refers to colloquial variety used in non-formal settings: at home, social occasions, etc. It can be said that the High variety is in parallel with SA / MSA and the Low variety correspond to DA.

In practice, Arabs do not keep MSA and their own dialects separate, but they mix them according to the degree of technical complexity of their subject, the degree of formality of the occasion, etc. That is, when one speaks one’s dialect, he will bring in SA / MSA in varying degree, and when speaking MSA, he may introduce colloquialisms
into it if it does not impair understanding on the part of the listener (See Abboud et al., 1995).

Thus, there seems to be an intermediate level between the MSA and DA. Hence, it would be better if we consider it as an ‘Intermediate Variety’ in support of the terms of Ferguson concerning varieties of Arabic: High Variety and Low Variety.

This Intermediate Variety usually occurs in speech and lacks some specific markers of High Variety, (i.e. Standard Arabic) such as case-markers, markers of indicative and subjunctive, etc. By and large, most of the educated people use it when they have to speak extemporaneously in semi-formal situations. Morphologically speaking, the pausal forms of Arabic High Variety are generally common in other varieties, i.e. modern dialects. In support of this intermediate variety, Kharma (1983: 4) indicates that there is something between standard Arabic and dialects and calls that ‘very near to MSA’. He states, "… Teachers in these schools also come from different Arab countries. Among these students and among those teachers, even in very informal conversation, no specific dialect can prevail. Consequently, even in conversation, the kind of language employed by educated people, including students is very near to MSA". In fact, it is a matter of adjusting one’s speech in the direction of MSA to solve the problem of difficulties of different dialects.
Thus, the researcher holds the view that it would be better to classify Arabic into three varieties, i.e. High, Intermediate and Low. Such a classification would be more practical and comprehensive to study the status of Arabic language.

It can be concluded that Arabic, unlike English, has not undergone major changes. The grammatical structure of Arabic remains unchanged like that of the Qur’aan and the ancient Arabic poetry.

1.6 Background to the Study

1.6.1 Education before Yemeni Unification in May 1990

The development of the current education system in Yemen began in 1962, the year of the revolution. It became large scale only during the 1970’s. Before this it was primarily the traditional Qur’anic schooling and not all people had access to it. Thus, educational situation in Yemen before Yemen unification, in May 1990, was humble in suiting the common circumstances at that stage for both North Yemen and South Yemen. That is to say that the Government mission focuses on keeping the revolution and fulfill its principles which would lead to the national unification and then the Pan Arab Unity.

The system of education was different in both North Yemen and South Yemen. For example, the ladder of education in North Yemen was three stages: primary (6 years), preparatory (3 years) and secondary (3 years) in schools as well as the Scientific (i.e.
Religious) Institutes. On the other hand, the education ladder in the South was similar to the educational ladder in the North. Then, it had shifted to basic education (8 years) and the secondary stage (4 years). It is worth mentioning that the secondary stage includes both science and arts streams in the two parts of Yemen.

Moreover, there were other streams at the secondary stage such as Agricultural, Veterinary, and Vocational in addition to Institutes of Teacher Training, of Health Sciences and of Telecommunication.

After the unification in May 1990, the need for education has become more to cope with the development which Yemen has witnessed. Thus, the unified state has spread the secondary education across the country and has unified the curriculum of various secondary schools in the academic year 2000/2001 under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.

The Yemeni society, in general, and the authority of education and Yemeni government, in particular, look at the teaching profession inferior to other professions. This is clear through the salary given to the teachers which is not enough and does not cover their necessity, on the one hand, and the incentives and the promotion are not enough, on the other. Moreover, the society's ambitions were simple and this affected the process of education, teaching efficiency, methods of teaching, techniques used in teaching, etc. (Ba'abad, 1982)
1.6.2 The Status of English in Yemen

English is the world’s most widely used and studied language. It has received significant attention from linguists and distinguished grammarians since the last century. The speakers of English constitute almost over a third of the world’s population, that is, more than 300 million people speak it as a native language. It is also a second language in many countries where it has an official status for administrative and legal functions, as it is in India and Nigeria. Moreover, it is commonly used for higher education even in the countries where it is regarded as a foreign language, as in the case of the Arab world. Besides, it is the leading language of modern science and technology and the lingua franca of the Internet. In addition, throughout the world, there are many English speaking educational institutions in which instruction and textbooks use English as the chief medium.

The overwhelming majority of the population of Yemen speaks Arabic as their mother tongue, whereas English, by both historical event and present day consensus, is learned as the principal foreign language. Although its importance is well recognized by many individuals, its strongest support comes from the government. Moreover, the strong economical and political ties between Yemen and the Western world play a vital role in the status accorded English today. As a language of international communication, English is widely used by academicians, professional people and businessmen. In fact, a large number of these people have received
their higher education overseas in English-speaking countries, like the United Kingdom, the United States, India, etc. English is also widely used in the media, hotels, airlines offices and other places of business.

1.6.3 English in Education

Perhaps the most important sector affected by English is formal education. Education in Yemen is both financed and administered by the Ministry of Education. The curriculum, which is uniform throughout the country in both public and private institutions, is set by the Committee of Curriculum and School Textbooks, which also selects and approves all reading materials used in the classroom.

The primary curriculum stresses basic literacy skills. Subjects taught include reading and writing in Arabic: religion, civics and history, arithmetic, geography, science, physical education: and drawing. English is added to the official curriculum of the public schools, although it is taught in some private schools from the beginning of the first grade. The majority of students start learning English at the seventh, eighth and ninth grades. At this stage, work on academic subjects continues to prepare students for the secondary stage in two major streams: science and arts. Other streams like vocational and technical education are also introduced at this stage.
Secondary education is somewhat selective in enrollment and quite specialized in purpose. Both academic (general) and vocational careers of study exist. The former is designed to prepare students for university level studies and the latter to train middle-level technical personnel for the working force. Within the academic curriculum, students further specialize in scientific or literary studies. Upon passing the secondary education examination, students qualify for higher education.

1.6.4 The Status of English Language Teaching in Yemen

English is now the fast dominating language in the world. It is the means of the international communication. Arabs need English to communicate with the native speakers of English. They need to go abroad, have access to many books and resources in the fields of science, technology, politics, education, commerce, industry, which are written in English. It is the language of medicine, mass media. So there's a great need for learning English.

English in Yemen plays an important role in people's life. Nowadays, there is a strong motivation for learning English and some abiding needs to speak English. The language today is used extensively in everyday life to communicate with foreigners we meet everyday. It is being widely used in the field of business, industry, education and various other professional fields. Consequently, there is a need for teaching it communicatively. Our students go abroad for scholarships and while living there they need
English for communication with these societies and they need English in their studies as well.

English in Yemen has no official status. Learning English is confined to the classroom. That is, the language is taught and used only in schools, institutes and universities. This status has recently been enhanced by the rapid growth of science and technology. Unfortunately, English in Yemen and in many Arab countries is taught like other subjects in the school curriculum because the motivation for learning the target language in this context is not high. This is especially the case in the early stages because young children are still unaware of their individual needs and interests. English also remains irrelevant to the majority of population especially in rural areas.

However, the need for English varies from one Arab country to another, depending on the degree of relationship with English speaking countries. English teaching has now started to take a dominant position in Yemeni schools, institutes and universities. It has occupied a prominent place in the university curriculum. The university of Science and Technology as a private university took the right step by establishing a Language Unit teaching all the students of the university an English programme consisting of 250 hours.
Prior to the 1970s, English was the medium of instruction at the school level in South Yemen. However, since then the Yemeni government has taken the decision of replacing English by Arabic as the medium of instruction from the school level up to the university level because it was believed that effective learning takes place only through one’s mother tongue (Ghanem, 1978).

The changing attitudes of people and the different policies adopted by the Yemeni Government have had drastic influences on the status and functions of the English language in the country. After the unification of the two parts of Yemen in May 1990, the Ministry of Education has issued a decree stating that English language should be taught as a compulsory subject from 7 instead of 5 in the primary schools. Instead of eight consecutive years in learning English, it decreased to six years, which as a result significantly reduced students’ amount of English language exposure.

This situation is worsened by the limited number of hours students spent learning English in higher education institutions. In Hadramout University, for example, English language lessons comprise two hours per week only. It is of no surprise that Arab learners of English encounter problems in communicative competence arising from this situation. This fact has been clearly stated by many researchers such as Abbad (1988) and Wahba (1998). Despite formally learning English for many years, many students’ level of English language proficiency is still far from satisfactory. An average Yemeni learner, it has been argued, fails to
perform day to day communicative chores in English in his/her personal, professional, academic and social spheres with an optimal degree of competence and confidence.

The policy to reduce and limit the contact hours for the teaching of English necessitates pedagogical intensification. Some efforts have been made along this line such as the introduction of new teaching materials for primary and secondary schools in Yemen which were prepared and published by Oxford University Press for English Language Teaching in the Arab World. This new production of English materials in Yemen reflects the government's positive policy towards English language teaching and learning as an essential strategy in a time of worldwide communication.

Despite their merits, unfortunately the materials have many shortcomings, which render them unsuitable for most Yemeni learners of English. According to Sahu (1999), they are not properly graded for teaching vocabulary and structures; do not take into cognizance the entry behavior or the background knowledge of the learners for whom they are intended. They are, nevertheless, good enough for any group of learners in English saturated learning environment, but seem to be anything but appropriate for the environment existing in Yemen where English has still to cover a lot of ground.
What might be the implications of the present situation on the future of English language teaching in Yemen? It is worth pointing out at this stage that despite their low proficiency level in English, most applicants are accepted into higher education institutions to be enrolled in various faculties including the English faculty, as reported by Abbad (1988). This situation is not restricted to Yemen, but also applies to the Arab world countries in general. English-mediated faculties accept high school graduates without taking into consideration their proficiency level and whether or not they will be able to manage.

Studies carried out at some Arab universities confirm that graduates of English departments – students who have chosen English as their major area – could not, on the average, cope with undergraduate university education through the medium of English. What’s more, these graduates are future teachers of English in Yemen. We may therefore be witnessing a vicious circle in the country unless drastic steps are taken to remedy it.

1.6.5 English at Pre-University Levels

English is taught in all governmental schools and private schools as a compulsory subject and as the first foreign language. In the governmental schools, the teaching of English starts from grade seven and from first grade. In some private schools and institutes it is taught for four to five hours, i.e. almost a class of 45 minutes a day. Its teaching is continued up to the end of the secondary stage.
And upon going to the university or technical colleges, they study English as a college requirement either for general purposes or for academic purposes.

The materials introduced in Yemeni schools are 'English for Yemen' which was previously used up to 1995 and later a new course 'Crescent English Course' has been used. In English for Yemen, the dialogue was the centre of learning. There was a dialogue practice. There were comprehension questions. Grammar was important in 'English for Yemen'. Grammar comes after reading. Reading reinforces grammar. Reading is a medium in 'English for Yemen'. A test based on 'English for Yemen' focused on vocabulary, reading and grammar, whereas in 'Crescent English Course' reading is a skill. When you test reading, you test skills. 'Crescent English Course' encourages students for communication by producing a large amount of vocabulary with pictures which makes it easy for the teacher to present English vocabulary without using Arabic. In 'English for Yemen Course' the accent is on creativity. Although English is taught from grade seven up to the end of the secondary stage, Yemeni students complete their secondary education without any much gain from all the courses they study. Furthermore, many graduates with a bachelor degree don’t have the ability to use English fluently.

There are many reasons behind these difficulties that influence teaching and learning of English in Yemeni schools. Some of these problems are related to the educational system. Instead of giving
English a high place in Yemeni curriculum and thinking about motivating the learners, the number of periods has been reduced to 3 periods in some classes. This makes the duration of the course very short to enable the teacher to handle all activities and tasks and makes it difficult to achieve the expected objectives. In other words, the system of teaching and learning English used by the teachers is still unsatisfactory because of the lack of planning. Other problems in the teaching learning of English are related to the materials introduced due to the inadequate finances, and some problems are related to the learners who are not interested in English classes. Other problems are due to the unclear strategies and approaches used in teaching English. The techniques and methods used in teaching the mother tongue are the same in teaching the foreign language. Many foreign language teachers lack communicative competence, linguistic competence and professional skills; and such teachers of English play a role in escalating the problems in this regard.

In conclusion, the strategies and approaches of teaching and learning English should be continually checked and reviewed to cope with the quick changes and the great developments taking place in the world. In addition, a knowledge of English should provide the student with a better understanding of the values and traditions of diverse peoples from different regions of the world.

It is believed that stating the goals as ambitious and impressive as they might sound is one thing, and obtaining good results through
the educational system in Yemen is another thing. The success as well as the failure of a foreign language programme depends on important factors other than specified goals. These factors are:

A. textbooks ;

B. teachers and methods of language teaching;

C. learners; and

D. the school situation.

The situation was not much improved in the high schools. Teachers in the high schools seem not to have a very good command of English. This problem of incompetent English language teachers seems to affect students' performance in English throughout their education, even at the post-secondary level. It has been reported by many instructors at the University that most secondary school graduates have not acquired sufficient command of English. They may know a great deal about English grammar, but their practical ability to read and to speak English is said to be insufficient for their needs.

The following are some of the findings of Al-Shamiry (2006) in his Ph.D. Abstract about (i) the existing English language course, (ii) the teachers, (iii) the learners and (iv) the school situation. These are as follows:
A. The Existing English Language Course:

1. There are not any clear aims and objectives for the English language course at the school level in Yemen.
2. The English language course at the school level in Yemen is unable to fulfill the Yemeni learners' English language needs.
3. Adequate balance between the four language skills within the English language course at the school level in Yemen does not exist.
4. Most of the Yemeni learners depend on the English language textbooks in use at the school level as the only source for learning the language.
5. Most of the English language teachers in Yemen believe that the English language textbooks in use at the school level are not so simple that all teachers with different range of experiences could use them easily and effectively.
6. The majority of the ELT specialists and the educational administrators believe that the English textbooks in use at the school level did not succeed in achieving the aims of the English language course.
7. Before adopting the existing English language textbooks there was not adequate investigation to find out the Yemeni learners' authentic language needs.
8. Only a small number of the students at the Secondary School Stage have recorded tapes related to the English textbooks content.
9. Nearly half of the English language teachers in Yemen have recorded tapes related to the course and only some of them use tapes recorders while teaching.

B. The Teachers:

1. Nearly all of the English language teachers at the school level in Yemen are English language specialized teachers.

2. There is a shortage of the in-service teacher training programmes, which are directed to equip the teachers with the new, and the necessary teaching methodology.

3. The existing teacher training programmes at the different teacher training institutions in Yemen need to be modified and modernized to equip teachers with the new teaching methodology.

4. The English language teachers in Yemen still use traditional teaching methods.

5. About one third of the English language teachers in Yemen became teachers not by their own choice.

6. A good number of the English language teachers in Yemen have a negative attitude towards teaching.

7. Nearly all of the English language teachers in Yemen do not use extra curricular activities.
C. The Learners:

1. The Yemeni learners have a positive attitude towards the English language.
2. The English proficiency level of the outcomes of the General Educational System in Yemen ranges between beginners and lower intermediate.
3. The target proficiency level of the English language course at the school level is the "intermediate level".
4. Most of the Yemeni learners are unable to understand their teachers when they speak in English during the classroom instruction.
5. A large number of the Yemeni learners face problems with grammar and spelling while writing in English.
6. Only few of the Yemeni learners take private tuitions in English.
7. Nearly half of the Yemeni learners do not have specific time to study English at home.
8. Nearly half of the Yemeni learners have opportunities to get help from others to study English outside the classroom instruction.

D. The School Situation:

1. The school situation in Yemen is not conducive for learning/teaching English.
2. A large number of students are accommodated in one single classroom.
3. The evaluation procedures in use at the school level in Yemen do not emphasize the assessment of the learners' speaking and listening skills.

4. The visual aids, which usually accompany the English language textbooks, are not available at schools in Yemen.

5. Most of the Yemeni schools do not have facilities for teaching English language such as English language clubs, language labs, cassette recorder, libraries, and English wall magazines.

6. The time given for the English language subject within the school plan is five periods per week for the Scientific Section and six periods per week for the Literary Section.

One more important point is that the role of the teachers inside their classes is more than it deserves. That is to say the learners become more passive and less active. Another contributing factor to the low level of English language proficiency is that teachers fail to teach their students the language skills needed. English classrooms tend to be teacher-centred. Students play a passive role in the learning process and are not given a chance to build up their confidence through much listening, speaking, reading and writing. Methodologists (e.g. Candlin 1976; Terrell 1985; Long 1983) agree that language skills are acquired only through practice and classroom interaction under teacher guidance. In fact the absence of real interactions between the Yemeni English teachers and their learners are due to the adoption of the old methods of teaching and focusing heavily on grammar translation method. Regarding this
point, he says: Very little of this interaction takes place. Old methods of teaching are unfortunately still being used in schools throughout Yemen. For example, the old grammar-translation method is dominant among most language teachers. Thus, teachers emphasize translation and memorization, rather than helping students develop their communicative competence. This encourages the students' tendency to rely on the mother tongue, even at advanced levels of their learning the target language.

The Ministry of Education has to tackle the following problems:

1. There is a shortage of educationally and professionally qualified teachers.
2. There is an outflow of qualified teachers to other Arab states.
3. Schools suffer from a shortage of adequate facilities such as laboratories and libraries.
4. Classrooms are overcrowded.
5. A continuous need exists for development and improvement of learning the teaching methods.

In the light of the above discussion, the current teaching situation in Yemen calls for well qualified teachers, the adoption of new TEFL methodologies and materials that are appropriate to the Yemeni context linguistically, psychologically and culturally.
1.6.6 Place of English at the University Level

When we move to English at the university level, we find that English plays a more critical role at the University level; it is used as a medium of instruction. The extent to which it is used in this regard, however, differs among the major universities. Some Universities of Yemen use English as a medium of instruction in the faculties of science, engineering and medicine, whereas, the humanities and social sciences are taught in Arabic. Yet, proficiency in English in a certain number of courses is required to all students. The shifting role of English between schools and universities is not made clear to the students in their first twelve years of formal education. Thus, as long as students are not aware of the important role of English at the post-secondary stage, English to them will not be viewed as more important than any other subject they need to study for a grade.

It is, hopefully, clear from this short profile of English language teaching in Yemen that English language nowadays becomes the most widely used language, particularly in the fields of education and technology. Thus, more extensive work in the areas of language planning and English teacher training are needed, if students are to achieve a satisfactory level of performance in EFL. Teaching materials and methodologies must also be given due attention. It is hoped that this study would shed some light on these problems and provide new directions to pursue in the country's efforts to meet the challenge of the expanding role of English in Yemeni education.
1.7 Definitions of Basic Terms

- **Contrastive Analysis:** is a scientific description of the target language to be carefully compared with a parallel description of the mother tongue of the learner. This comparison of the descriptions results in various statements about the two languages' similarities and differences.

- **Error Analysis:** is the systematic investigation of a language learner’s errors. Corder is considered as the father of error analysis. His pioneering thoughts and work have enriched the area of analyzing and categorizing the errors which are committed by learners. Error analysis attempts to make use of these errors and shows that such errors are significant. They don’t occur by chance. The systematic analysis of the learners’ errors has developed the area of error analysis with many models of analysis and categorization. (See, Hendrickson, 1980; Corder, 1981 and Richards, 1992).

- **Errors and Mistakes:** Errors are systematic and unrecoverable, while mistakes are not. The study of errors provides a more representative as well as plausible image of the linguistic behavior of the learners. The study of errors, then, is considered the more appropriate tool for handling the language of the informants. This is one of the tasks of errors analysis. See for example Corder (1967 & 1981) and Kormos and Denes (2004). Mourtaga (2004) states that errors and mistakes are different because an error cannot be self-
corrected and is caused by a learner’s inadequate knowledge in the target language, whereas a mistake can be self-corrected.

- **Difficulties:** are the problems or obstacles faced by the students in their studies.
- **Transfer:** is the influence of the knowledge of one language (usually the MT) on the learning of another. Where the two are similar, positive transfer (i.e. facilitation) may take place. Negative transfer (i.e. interference) may be found where the two are different.
- **Inter-lingual errors:** errors due to the interference from the mother tongue.
- **Intra-lingual errors:** are errors due to the interference within English language, i.e. developmental errors.
- **Sources of errors:** whether inter-lingual or intra-lingual
- **Causes of errors:** may be interchangeable with the term "sources" but mainly refers to the external causes like faulty materials and poor teaching.
- **Secondary school:** a secondary school, in the Yemeni education system, is the stage which prepares students for a university level. Students have often to fulfill certain academic requirements to be eligible for the university education. The average of the students’ age is between 16 and 18 years.
1.8 Structure of the Study

The thesis comprises five chapters. The first chapter is a brief introductory chapter which starts off with the statement of the problem of the study and purpose and plan of the research. It signifies the nature of the problem being investigated, the research questions and the hypotheses underlying the study. It also mentions the scope and limitation of the research. It provides a brief background of the two languages followed by definitions of terms used in this work. It ends with the structure of the thesis.

The major part of the second chapter is concerned with a brief review of the related literature. It discusses Contrastive Analysis, on the one hand, and Error Analysis, on the other, to make use of their general principles. It outlines the development of CA, its methodology and predictions in addition to syllabus design as a chief application of CA. It also highlights the development of EA and ends with the pedagogical goals of CA and EA and how these two approaches are complementary rather than exclusive. The other part of this chapter is a review of the available related studies that have been done on errors made by Yemeni and Arab learners of English.

Chapter three is entitled Research Methodology and Data Collection Procedures. It sets out the methodology utilized in the present research. It accounts for the data collection and describes the subjects of the research and their background. It also highlights data
analysis including the following steps: identification of errors, classification of errors into linguistic categories; and explanation of the possible causes of errors. It discusses the organization of the results and spells out two major dimensions along which errors are explained: (a) inter-lingual or interference and (b) intra-lingual or developmental errors.

The fourth Chapter, Results and Discussion, presents the findings of the study, discusses them and gives an analysis and interpretation of these findings in the light of the objectives, the research questions and the hypotheses of the thesis. This chapter discusses and categorizes the inter-lingual and intra-lingual errors at the syntactic level. The major part of this chapter is devoted to the errors in the following grammatical categories: verb forms, verb tenses, subject-verb agreement (i.e. third person singular marker, copulas and auxiliaries), copulas counting for their omission and addition, prepositions, articles and adverbs & adjectives. It further discusses the semantic errors due to literal translation and the errors in spellings and punctuation and capitalization.

The last chapter is entitled Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations. It highlights the purpose of the study and recapitulates the significant errors made by Yemeni Secondary School Students. It also sums up the findings, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research.