Chapter 2

Theoretical background and Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter has been mainly devoted to understanding the errors and their causes which form the basis of the study, along with literature review.

The investigation into the errors of learners reveals that the teachers of ESL expect their students to speak flawless English (Burt 1975). However, errors keep recurring and thus, divergent views and attitudes have been held towards commission of errors. As early as the 50s and well into the 60s of the 20th Century, committing of errors was viewed as something sinful on the part of second language (SL) learners and has to be eradicated (Brooks 1960 cited in Hendrickson 1978). Richards 1992, Taylor 1975, Dulay and Burt 1974 are interested in errors because they are believed to contain among other things valuable information on the strategies that language learners employ to acquire a language.

Thus, the study of errors becomes the cornerstone of a successful learning process due to the value they have in acquiring a language. In fact, committing errors is a natural phenomenon in language acquisition. These errors are committed by all second language (L2) learners, whatever their first language (L1) might be and Arab learners of English are no exception.

In fact, Arab applied linguists and researchers have investigated the syntactic errors committed by Arab learners of English but they just try to list
these errors without probing deeply into their reasons, sources and/or consequences. Only relatively few studies have dealt with how such errors are classified, and identified the sources and causes of these errors. This is because identifying and/or listing errors is a linguistic phenomenon whereas identifying the source of an error is a psycholinguistic.

In order to examine any aspect of inter-language of learners satisfactorily, the investigator usually makes use of two different yet complementary techniques, namely Contrastive Analysis (CA) and Error Analysis (EA). The ultimate objective of analysis is to shed light on the source of error caused by negative transfer of L1 structures and other types of errors will not be predicted or explained by CA. The EA, on the other hand, is a technique employed by investigators to probe the interlanguage of the learner in terms of his failure to internalize the structures of the foreign language as well as in terms of his achievement or progress in that language.

Thus, EA can account for all types of errors i.e., interlingual or intralingual and its heavy reliance on CA in identifying the source of interlingual or transfer of errors becomes obvious. It follows then that CA is an important aspect of and complementary to EA. It seems fair to suggest that the domain of EA is much wider than that of CA if we take into account the interlanguage of the learners, the strategies s/he may use and psycholinguistic factors behind the commission of errors.

This chapter presents a review of the research relevant to the problem of analysing interlanguage grammar in the written performance of Yemeni
students learning English as a foreign language. The studies reviewed represent the three approaches that have been widely used over the past few decades, namely CA, EA and Interlanguage, even though, these approaches are often regarded as complementary in the investigation of difficulties of learners.

Modern linguists note that first language learners are never expected to produce only correct utterances from the very beginning; their deviant utterances are rather considered evidence for language progress. By the same token, second language learners are also thought to be apt to produce deviant utterances before they achieve native-like competence. Like those of first language learners, the utterances of second language learners, both correct and incorrect, are believed to be an indication of their competence at a particular stage (Corder, 1967 & 1973; Richards, 1992). Spolsky (1969) has noted that not all correct utterances can be taken as proof that the right system has been acquired, just because the learner may be repeating a heard utterance, in which case his behaviour should better be classed as ‘language-like behaviour’.

It is rather difficult to examine the second language learning without considering the research in first language acquisition. Not only does the field of second language learning owe a great deal of child language in terms of research methodology, but many researchers have been concerned with the question of whether or not second language learning is like the first (Dulay &Burt, 1972; Ervin-Tripp, 1974). Within this framework, the following research areas are central to the present review:

1. Contrastive Analysis (CA) and Error Analysis (EA).
2. Inter-language.

3. First and second language acquisition/learning.

4. Some studies of syntactic errors made by non-Arabic speaking learners of English.

5. Studies of syntactic errors made by Arabic speaking learners of English.

When there is a great difference between the languages and cultures, there will be interference (Jakobovits, 1969; Lado, 1957). English and Arabic emerged from two different and dissimilar languages; therefore, certainly there would be interference when Arabic speakers learn English. Arabic is a Semitic language, and English is an Indo-European language.

As early as since 1940s, the linguists have been concerned about the issue of interference. Such concern led linguists, such as Lado (1957) and Banathi and Madarsz (1969), to find out the similarities and dissimilarities between some languages. Because of this concern, the CA approach emerged.

With the discovery of limitations of CA approach, new approach was developed in 1965, which was called Error Analysis (EA). The following section will cite the selected literature relevant to the above-mentioned approaches.

2.2 Contrastive Analysis (CA)

The CA refers to a description of (L1) and (L2) and a comparison of the descriptions which is the outcome of different statements about the similarities and dissimilarities of the two languages. The CA was first developed by
Charles Fries (1945) as an integral part of the modern methodology of foreign language teaching. Fries (1945) has strongly stated the following about the CA hypothesis, “The most effective materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner” (1945, p. 9).

Along the same lines, in the preface to *Linguistics across Cultures*, Lado, a student of Fries has explained as to how the method should actually work by identifying the similarities and differences between the languages, highlighting, and predicting the difficulties of the learners:

The plan of the book rests on the assumption that we can predict and describe the patterns that will cause difficulty in learning and those that will not cause difficulty, by comparing systematically the language and culture to be learned with the native language and culture of the student. (1957, p.vii)

The basic concept behind CA was that a structural ‘picture’ of any one language could be constructed which might then be used in direct comparison with the structural ‘picture’ of another language. Through a process of ‘mapping’ one system into another, similarities and differences could be identified. Identifying the differences would lead to a better understanding of the potential problems that a learner of the particular L2 would face.

The influence of first language in learning/acquisition of a second language was mentioned by Lado (1957) (cited in Gass and Selinker, 2008, p.89) who for the first time articulated this common observation of
practicing teachers in stating that and the reason why it was found essential to carry out the analysis was based on the fact that:

The individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture - both productively when attempting to speak the language and to act in the culture and receptively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and the culture as practiced by natives. (Lado, 1957:2 cited in Gass and Selinker 2008, 89)

The assumption of error

The statements in ‘Linguistics across Culture’ of Lado represent the procedure of an approach developed by the structural linguists based on the behaviorist model of language acquisition. The model consists of the following assumptions:

1. A language is a set of habits;
2. Old habits (i.e., the native language) are hard to break while new habits (i.e., the second or foreign language) are hard to acquire;
3. The native language will of necessity interfere with the learning of a second or foreign language;
4. The differences between the native language and the foreign language will be the main cause of errors. (Celce-Murcia and Hawkins, 1985, pp. 60-61)

Lado’s Linguistics across Cultures 1957, thus became the actual foundation charter and classic field manual for CA on the basis of which the whole enterprise of contrastive linguist was launched. The reasoning behind the theory was simple: when learning L2, a person will tend to use structures of
mother tongue in L2 production, and where L1 structures differ from the L2, mistakes will be made. Therefore, it can be inferred in an overtly simplistic way, the identification of differences and similarities between various languages was enough to deal with the problems of teaching those languages. If two languages were similar, positive transfer occurred; if they were different, the transfer would be negative. Moreover it was thought that the greater the difference between them, the more difficult they would be to acquire, whereas the more similar, the easier they would be to acquire. The method consisted of predicting errors before they were made and drilling the target language forms, before negative transfer occurred.

Rivers (1964) has seen CA as distinctive contribution of the linguistic scientists and results of studies of these contrasts are incorporated in the materials prepared for class and laboratory work (p, 14).

Strevens (1965) makes a similar statement in saying that the most appropriate materials for teaching a language are those which embody a bilingual compression of the mother tongue and the target language.

Politzer (1968) concurs in stating that perhaps the least questioned or questionable application for language teaching is the contribution of contrastive studies (p,151).

The Contrastive studies were also carried out involving English and German, English and Spanish, and English and Italian by the Center for Applied Linguistics in the United States. Some were considered to be of real pedagogical value, such as the research conducted by Stockwell, Bowen and
Martin (1965) regarding the hierarchy of difficulty for English speakers learning Spanish (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991, p.53). Nevertheless, it seems that the CAH failed to provide a scientific backing for this teaching methodology, while it also failed to respond to questions concerning the lack of uniform success in adult foreign language learners. The major flaws included:

1. Despite the intention of applying the results of contrastive studies in the actual classroom, this did not materialize and teachers became dissatisfied with its proposals, which were seen to be unpractical and over-theoretical.

2. Language instructors were more interested in the known and recognized difficulties rather than theoretically predicted ones.

3. Many errors are not traceable to the L1, but are common to learners with different mother tongue backgrounds.

4. Many errors were under-predicted by CA and were not anticipated, whereas others were greatly over-predicted as they simply did not arise in practice at all.

For a number of years, the CA has been predominant in L2 learning theory with regard to pedagogy in foreign languages; that is, to prepare materials, taking into consideration the relationship between two linguistic systems of the native language and target language when learning a foreign language. According to Whitman (1970), CA involves four procedures:

1. Description of the two languages in question
2. Selection of forms for contrast

3. The contrast by itself

4. “Prediction” of errors or of difficulty on the basis of the first three procedures.

Wardaugh (1970) has distinguished between ‘the strong version’ and ‘the weak version’ of CA. The strong version is Lado’s predictive approach, which states that wherever there are differences between native language of the learners and the target language, there will be interference from the native language. Stockwell, Bowen and Martin (1965) have claimed that the most difficult items of the target language are those for which there are no counterparts in the native language. The strong version seems to predict that the greater the difference between the target language and native language, the greater the ‘interference’ from the native language. The essential assumption of this viewpoint is that the knowledge of the native language inhibits learning the target language and causes interference, which is great at the points of greatest difference.

On the other hand, the ‘weak version’ of CA contends that in learning a second language the native language does not really ‘interfere’ with learning so much that it provides an escape when the learner is in a tight spot. Newmark (1966) has suggested that when a learner does not know how to say something in the target language, he/she automatically fall back on the mother tongue, which is more of ‘not knowing’ something in the target language than it is
native language interference. This viewpoint seems to suggest that what is most
difficult for the learners is what they do not already know. It further seems to
assume that the knowledge of the native language does not inhibit learning the
target language. Errors occur when the greatest difference exists between the
two language systems, not because the knowledge of native language acts as an
inhibiting factor but rather because the learner falls back on a native system
that lacks correspondence to that of the target language.

2.3 Error Analysis (EA)

The CA may be helpful if it is combined and used with another approach
such as Error Analysis (EA). This approach has been psychologically oriented
towards an explanation of second language acquisition (Corder, 1967, 1974;
Richards, 1992).

The EA has been considered as a replacement or supplement to CA.
Schumann and Stenson (1974) have pointed out that many linguists adopted
EA because of the inadequacy of CA in accounting for the learner’s errors.
After realizing that CA did not provide sufficiently acceptable explanation for
the errors made by the students, the question arose as to “why not look at the
ersors the students actually make, locate the area in which those errors occurred
and finally contrast only those specific areas?” (Wilkins, 1968). This was the
initial step for true EA.
EA can be defined as a linguistic process through which the teacher attempts to analyse a student’s written or spoken production of the foreign/second language he/she is learning. This process includes identifying, describing and interpreting the errors and their possible causes (Brickbichler, 1977; Burt, 1975; Corder, 1967, 1973; Duskova, 1969).

EA, in its early stage, dealt with the practical needs of the classroom teacher. There was not much effort to systematically account for the errors in linguistic and psychological terms. Thus, EA was interested in collecting data, recognizing errors, identifying difficulties and preparing materials (Sharma, 1981).

The shift toward this new approach, EA, came when CA claimed to predict errors and difficulties and explain them in terms of interference. The interest in errors and their significance have enhanced Corder’s insight. In his article, “The Significance of Learner’s Errors” (1992), he gives specific reasons about the significance of the errors committed by a learner. According to Corder (1992), errors should be taken as evidence of the learning strategies used by second language learners. He states that:

A learner’s errors are significant in three different ways. First, to the teacher, in that they tell him, if he undertakes a systematic analysis, how far towards the goal, the learner has progressed and finally, what remains of him to learn. Second, they provide to the researchers, evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learners are employing in their discovery of the language. Thirdly, they are indispensable to the learner himself, because we can regard the making of errors as a device the learner uses in order
to learn. It is a way the learner has of testing his hypothesis about the nature of the language he is learning. (p.25)

According to Richards (1971), EA means the following: “The field of EA may be defined as dealing with the differences between the ways people learning a language speak and the way adult native speakers of the language use the language” (p.12). The emphasis, here, is on the errors which ignore the non-occurrence of errors, thus leading to a limited perspective on the second language learning process. The non-occurrence of errors may mean that the learners of the target language are avoiding using certain constructions. This means that errors and non-errors must be analysed (Schachter & Hart, 1979).

Conventional EA is based on those that are identified and described according to the second/foreign language system; that is, EA constructs the learner’s performance and the foreign/second language structure (Corder, 1971). Obeidat (1986) mentioned that Corder’s main contribution to EA has been to promote the study of errors, not for diagnostic purposes alone, but also as means of determining the language learner and comparing them with those of the first language learner (p.25). The EA approach examines errors pertaining to all possible sources. In this regard, Brown (2007) states that:

The EA became distinguished from CA by its examination of errors attributable to all possible sources, not just those which result from negative transfer of the native language. Errors arise from several possible general sources: interlingual errors of interference from the native language and intralingual errors with the target language. (p.166)
Both EA and CA may be combined to solve the language teaching and learning problems with regard to learners’ performance when learning a foreign language. With regard to this view, Duskova(1969) states that:

In conclusion, we shall attempt to answer the last question raised in this study as to whether CA of the source and target languages can be entirely replaced by an error–based analysis. The present findings do not seem to justify such a procedure. They rather suggest that CA might be profitably supplemented by the results of error–based analysis particularly in the preparation of teaching materials. The value of CA in the preparation of teaching materials is generally recognized both as a means of prevention and finding remedy to errors. Further improvement of teaching materials based on CA might be achieved by inclusion of the most common errors occurring outside the sphere predicted by CA alone. (p.29)

Moreover, Neckel (1971) has said that “the EA and CA do not exclude each other, on the contrary, they complement each other; the former covers more than only contrastive relations, the later tries to describe errors but also to analyse one particular source in detail” (p.11).

It has been cited previously that CA dealt with how the teacher could predict learners’ errors and design materials accordingly, but the linguists have shifted their focus from the teacher to the learner. The learner is considered to be the active participant in learning the target language and the native/foreign language acquisition has been considered as a dynamic process (Cook, 1973 ;Dulay& Burt, 1972; Selinker, Swain ,& Dums, 1975).

Selinker (1992) switched the focus by describing the result of the dynamic processes of various learning strategies, from notion of the native
language interference in the use of the target language. He stressed that those processes consist of a separate linguistic system called interlanguage, and it can be said that it consists of the interaction of the two languages.

In the analysis of the evolution of the treatment of errors in the field of language learning, there is, without a doubt, one highly relevant seminal article, which is quoted in all subsequent studies in the field. We refer Corder’s ‘The Significance of Learner’s Errors’. In this article, Corder (1992) has established an analogy between the errors produced by a child learning his/her mother tongue and those of a second or foreign language learner. Normally an utterance made by a child in his/her L1 such as ‘This mummy chair’ would not be considered incorrect or deviant. It might, nevertheless, be followed by an adult expanding the utterance with:

‘Yes, dear, that’s Mummy’s chair’.

In this case, as Corder explains:

We interpret his ‘incorrect’ utterances as being evidence that he is in the process of acquiring language and indeed, for those who attempt to describe his knowledge of the language at any point in its development, it is the errors which provide the important evidence. (1992,pp.22-23)

Similarly, in second language acquisition, Corder (1981,p.11) states that errors are indispensable to the learner himself, because we can regard the making of errors as a device used in order to learn and to make hypotheses about the nature of the language being learnt. It must be added that Corder himself did not consider the word ‘erroneous’ a correct term for the deviant
forms produced in a learner’s linguistic repertoire at any one stage of the learning process. This learner language, according to Selinker (1992,p.35), “Made researchers hypothesize the existence of a separate linguistic system based on the observable output which results from a learner’s attempted production of a TL norm”.

This interim language Selinker named Interlanguage, adding, without a doubt, a new dimension to the study of the learner language, which before hand with CA had meant a one-way comparison between the L1 and the TL/L2, and which now included three main points of interest.

![Diagram of Interlanguage](image)

This dynamic system can be envisaged as a continuum on which the learner builds up, in a systematic way, his/her knowledge of the target language and which may show features at different stages of both L1 or any other languages learnt and the TL or of neither of these. This continuum was first regarded as a restructuring continuum ranging from the learners’ L1 to the TL. Later it was seen by some authors as a re-creation continuum in which the learner continuously adds to and refines the complexity of the system (Mizuno, 1999,p.129).
Thus, the errors that are detected in the learner’s L1 provide us with evidence of different types:

1. They reveal in his/her performance, the rule-governed system of the language and what has been learnt or how far s/he has progressed.

2. Which strategies or procedures have been employed in the language learning experience?

3. How the learner is continually testing hypotheses about the nature of the language.

As claimed by Schachter & Celce-Murcia (1977) “The newly elaborated methodological tool, EA, follows closely the psycholinguistic research for an alternative to the behaviorist habit-formation theory of language acquisition – one that attempts to explain the essentially creative nature of the language acquisition process” (1977,p.442).

Essentially considered an ‘approach’ to the study of learners’ language, the EA has been used for three main purposes, according to Olsen (1999,p.91):

1. For second language acquisition.

2. As evidence for the study of L1 influences in the learner’s interlanguage.

3. For pedagogical reasons, pointing out problematic areas to be focused on in the teaching syllabus.
2.3.1 The Practical Uses of EA

The EA is part of the methodology of language learning that is learned to help the difficulties of the students. By analyzing the learner’s errors, it will be found that the description of errors can be used as feedback by the teacher to decide the follow up. Sujoko (1989, p. 48) states that the practical uses of EA are as follows:

a. Errors provide feedback; they tell the teacher something about the effectiveness of his teaching materials and his teaching techniques.

b. They show the teacher, the parts of the syllabus that have been inadequately learned or taught and need further attention.

c. They enable the teacher to decide how much time and effort needs to be devoted to which areas. This is the day-to-day value of EA.

d. They provide the information for designing a remedial syllabus or a program of re-teaching.

From the above explanation it can be concluded that EA is an activity to analyze the errors of learners to reveal something of the system, through observing, classifying, identifying, separating and describing.

As mentioned above, the practical uses of EA is very significant both to the teacher and the learner. It means that he analyzes the errors and corrects
them. For the learners, the practical uses of EA can facilitate them in improving the English mastery.

2.4 Interlanguage Theories

2.4.1 The origins of Inter-language Theory

The term interlanguage came to prominence in 1972 in Selinker’s paper of the same name. Stern states that, “the concept of interlanguage was suggested by Selinker in order to draw attention to the possibility that the learner’s language can be regarded as a distinct language variety or system with its own particular characteristics and rules (1983, p.125).

Ellis (1995) has reviewed the origins of interlanguage theory and notes, that there are two distinct views of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). One view, put forward by a mentalist or psycholinguistic, is that the theories of language acquisition which is that the learners acquire L2 in much the same way as they acquire L1. It is because of an inbuilt faculty for language acquisition. The other view is based on the concept of SLA with environmental factors and L1 interference acquisition.

The psycholinguistic view is largely based on Chomsky’s (1959) concept of Universal Grammar which asserts that people are born with ‘innate linguistic principles, comprising the ‘initial state’ which controlled the form of the sentences of any given language could take’ (Ellis, 1995). Chomsky’s
concept also included an Acquisition Device which would be put into operation by exposure to primary linguistic data (Chomsky, 1966).

This is a theory which helps us shift from a right/wrong approach to English, without losing sight of accuracy. Its chief proponent is Larry Selinker. Before this theory, it was believed that second language errors were made due to interference from the speaker's first language. Of course, these types of errors do occur and are easy to trace.

But Selinker tried to find out a way to explain that the errors some learners make which have nothing to do with their foreign language and are made across the board of languages. This is when Selinker devised the ‘Interlanguage continuum’. Ever since, the Interlanguage has become a major tool of SLA research and theory. While learning a SL, the learners build up a system for themselves, known by various names, which are different in some ways from their first language and second language systems. However, the most widely used terminology is that suggested by Selinker (1972,1992). He calls this, as Interlanguage, to emphasize the structurally intermediate status of the learners' language system, between learner's mother tongue and his target language. Studying Interlanguage could help us to understand the learners’ problems better and try to help learners, so that they achieve competence.

Based on this theory, interlanguage, that there is a 'psychological structure talent in the brain' that is activated when one attempts to learn a new language, Selinker (1992) proposed the theory of Interlanguage (IL). This term
is used to refer to both the internal system that a learner has constructed an IL at a single point in time and the series of inter connected systems that characterize the learners progress over time (Interlanguage continuum) (Ellis, 1997, p.33).

Various terms have been introduced to refer to the language system created by foreign language learners. The best known is ‘interlanguage’ as mentioned and discussed by Selinker, can be considered as the father of Interlanguage. It is the language system a foreign language learner creates in an attempt to convey meaning. It results from the combination of rules of both native and target language.

Other terms have been used to refer to interlanguage. These include ‘interim grammar’ (Cook 1969), ‘transitional competence’ (Corder, 1967, 1992), ‘intralingual and developmental errors /transitional competence’ (Richards 1971, 1992), ‘idiosyncratic dialect’ (Corder, 1971, 1992), ‘communicative interference’ (Hymes, 1974), and ‘approximative system’ (Nemser 1971, 1992). Faerch, Haastrup, and Phillipson (1984) have defined ‘interlanguage’ as a variety of language which exists in a contact situation between a learner’s L1 (the language he knows and masters) and an L2 (the language he is actually exposed to).

It can be said that ‘interlanguage’ is first a language system different from L1 and L2 with a structure of rules which provides order to the linguistic chaos that confronts the learner (Brown 2007). Selinker (1972, 1992)
maintained that interlanguage must be dealt with as a system because it is a highly structured behavior. It has the structural properties that language has (Corder 1973).

Unlike other natural language, interlanguage is ‘interim’ because each point during the process of learning L2 represents the non-native speaker’s hypotheses about the structure of the L2. Such hypotheses constitute a kind of ‘interim grammar’ which the learner constructs, tests, preserves or abandons. According to Cook (1969), one’s first language is learned in much the same way by a series evolving hypotheses.

It is ‘approximative’ by its stress on the changing, dynamic characteristics of a learner’s language, on the notion of approximation to some goal, and on the notion of movement and change (Nemser 1971,1992). It is ‘transitional’ as shown in the changes of linguistic behavior from one stage to another in the learning process; these changes being caused by the learner’s dynamic application of language rules, strategies and hypotheses (Corder 1967, 1992). It is ‘idiosyncratic’ in that the learner’s language is unique to an individual, and the rules of this language are peculiar to the language of this particular foreign language speaker alone. The speaker can be said to be the only native speaker of the language, though it may share some properties with the language of other people who have the same language background (Corder 1974, 1992). It shares many characteristics with natural languages. If
interlanguage is not a linguistic system, then it will be beyond the grasp of linguistic science and analytic procedures (Adjemian 1976).

The theory of IL was the first major attempt to explain the process of SLA. It was one of the few theories of that time which was did not contradict the critical period hypothesis. It was also important as many other theories were developed out of it. To explain the process of the SLA better, the IL asks three important questions:

Firstly, it asks what processes are involved and are responsible for IL construction?

Secondly, it addresses a question on the nature of IL continuum, and

Thirdly, it asks for an explanation as to why most learners do not achieve the full L2 competence (Ellis, 1994).

The idea of IL is founded on the assumption that an L2 learner, at any particular moment in his learning sequence, is using a language system which is neither L1, nor L2. It is a third language, with its own Grammar, its own lexicon and so on. The rules used by the learners are unlikely to be found in his mother tongue or in the target language.

2.4.2 Selinker’s five processes

It was Selinker’s (1992) concept of IL that led to the theory that learners acquire a second language in a fixed order leading to proficiency or close to
proficiency of L2. He chose to disregard the small percentage of learners who achieved native-speaker competence as he assumed that because languages are constantly changing any learner who achieved L2 proficiency must have done so without being taught everything he or she had acquired. Instead he focused on what he saw as ideal second language learners and concluded that because the L2 utterances of the ideal learners differed from what native-speakers would say had they tried to communicate the same meaning then:

One would be completely justified in hypothesizing, perhaps even compelled to hypothesize, the existence of a separate linguistic system based on the observable output which results from a learner’s attempted production of a target language norm. This linguistic system will be called ‘interlanguage. (Selinker, 1992,p.35)

According to Selinker (1992), IL is a temporary grammar, which is systematic and composed of rules. These rules are the product of five main cognitive processes. They are 1. Language transfer 2. Transfer of training 3. Strategies of second language learning, 4. Strategies of second language communication ,and 5. Overgeneralization

2. 4.2.1 Language Transfer

It refers to speakers or writers applying knowledge of their native language to a second language. It is most commonly discussed in the context of English language learning and teaching, but it can occur in any situation when someone does not have a native-level of command over a language, as when translating into a second language. It is the effect of one language on the
learning of another. The learner uses his own first language as a resource. This used to be looked upon as a mistake/error, but it is now recognized that all learners fall back on the mother tongue. Sometimes, rules and structures of first language can be transferred for production of second language.

“Transfer” was defined by behaviorist psychologists as “the automatic, uncontrolled and subconscious use of past learned behaviors in an attempt to produce new response” (Duly et al., 1982, p.102). It has also been used by educational psychologists to refer to the use of past knowledge or experience in new situations. For example, learners may use their past knowledge in the first language when they learn a second language. If they know to read one language, they do not have to learn written symbols representing sounds in second language. In this case, “the basic concepts and skills involved in reading are said to be transferred to the new language” (Dulay et al., 1982, p. 101).

In SLA, it is believed that the learner’s first language significantly influences the SLA (Brown, 2007; Dulay et al., 1982; Ellis, 1995; Selinker & Lakshamanan, 1992).

Odlin (1989) defines “transfer” as “the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired” (Odlin, 1989, p. 9). Based on this definition, two types of language transfers are distinguished: positive and negative transfers.
2.4.2.1.1 Positive Transfer or Facilitation

Positive transfer is “any facilitation effecting acquisition due to the influence of cross-linguistic similarities” (Odlin, 1989, p.168). It is believed that much of the influence of the native language or of some other language that the learner has previously learned can be of great use, especially when the differences between the native language and the target language are relatively few.

Linguistic similarities produce positive transfer in several ways. For example, similarities between native language and target language vocabulary facilitate reading comprehension. Similarities in syntactic structure assist in grammar learning and similarities in writing systems will provide a good start for learners in reading and writing the target language better.

2.4.2.1.2 Negative Transfer or Interference

Odlin defines “negative transfer” as “cross linguistic influences resulting in errors, overproduction, underproduction, miscomprehension and other effects that constitute a divergence between the behavior of native and non-native speakers of a language” (Odlin, 1989, p. 167). In other words, negative transfer is the use of a native language pattern or rule which leads to an error or inappropriate form in the target language.

Several studies in the field of SLA and EA have reported negative transfer or interference of the native language as the prime cause of errors (e.g., Anderson, 1978; El-Sayed, 1982; Karma, 1981; Rosansky, 1976). Anderson
(1978) and Rosansky (1976) investigated errors of Spanish speakers in the use of English articles and found that interference of Spanish was the major cause of errors. Karma (1981) studied article errors committed by Arab students. He found that a great number of errors were due to the mother tongue interference. El-Sayed (1982) has examined syntactic errors made by Saudi students. His findings also substantiated the previous findings that interference from the first language was the major cause of errors.

2.4.2.2 Transfer of Training (induced error)

It is an error which is caused by the way a language item has been presented or practiced. For example, if a teacher overuses utterances with the use of 'he' it discourages the use of 'she'.

2.4.2.3 Strategies of second language learning

Some of the rules in the learners IL may result from the application of language learning strategies as a tendency on the part of the learners to reduce the target language to a simpler system (Selinker 1992). It can be called simplification when the learner uses only one form of a verb in all cases.

For example:

1. *I go to school tomorrow.
2. *I go to school now.
3. *I go to school yesterday.
4. *He go to school to school every day.
2.4.2.4 Strategies of Second Language Communication

The IL system rules may also be the outcome of strategies employed by the learners in their attempt to communicate with natives, speaking the target language when, for example, learner omits grammatically redundant items in an utterance, producing ill formed sentence.

*I read book. The article 'a' has been omitted.

2.4.2.5 Overgeneralization

The extension of use of grammatical rules of linguistic items beyond their accepted uses, by a learner in both first and second language learning is a common process. For example: the learner may use third person singular even after Modal verb:

*he will plays football.

Because he has studied that 3rd person singular must take 's' as a marker of present simple or he can add 'ed' to all the verb and he did not recognize that the verb can be regular with 'ed' or without 'ed' and call irregular.

Ex. He played chess.

He goes to school.

So the learners may produce the following incorrect sentences:

*He goed to school.

*He can goes to school.
The second theory of IL was adopted by Adjemian (1976) in his attempt to describe the nature of the IL systems. He argued that Interlanguages are natural languages but they are unique in that their grammar is permeable. He also differentiated between the learning strategies that learners employed and the linguistic rules that are "crucially concerned in the actual form of the language system". He (1976) concluded that the description of the properties of the learner's grammar should be the primary goal of linguistic research.

The third approach of the description of IL was initiated by Tarone (1979, 1982). She described IL as a continuum of speech styles. Learners shifted between styles according to the amount of attention they paid to the language form. It ranges from the super ordinate styles in which attention is mainly focused on language form to the vernacular style in which the least attention is paid to language form. The new target language forms first appeared in the more careful style and progressively moved towards the vernacular style. The systematic variability of IL systems is reflected on the variable effect of different tasks and different linguistic contexts on the learners' use of syntactic, phonological and morphological structures (1982).

Different approaches were employed for explaining the acquisition of IL and how learners discovered and organized form-function relationships in SL. The approaches to the study of IL, as described above, agree on two basic characteristics of IL system:
Interlanguages are systematic (systematic either in the form of language strategies the learners employ or linguistic rules that govern the learners grammars) and dynamic (Interlanguages keep changing until the target language system is fully acquired).

The scope of these approaches is also common: IL is seen as a kind of ‘interim grammar ‘gradually progressing towards the target language.

The IL theories were derived from studies following EA. By analyzing errors, we can predict the linguistic stage of a learner. However, EA as a mode of inquiry was limited in its scope and concentrated on the errors committed by learners rather than on what made them successful (Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991).

2.4.3 Stages of Interlanguage Development

There are many ways to describe the progression of linguistic development and the variability of learners in their acquisition. According to Brown (2007:266–268) there are four stages of IL development:

1. The first stage is a stage of ‘random errors’ in which the learners do not know that there are some systematic orders to a particular class of items;

2. The second stage is ‘emergent’. The learners become consistent in linguistic production;
3. The third stage is a ‘systematic stage’ in which the learners are able to show more consistency. When their errors are pointed out, they will correct their errors instantly. Of course, they are more close to the target language;

4. The fourth stage is ‘the stabilization stage’, which is featured by the learners’ total language system. The learners might be in second stage of the subjunctive mood, but they are in the fourth stage of past tense system.

2.5 First and Second Language Acquisition/Learning

The growth of the SLA field has continued since the 1960s. Hatch (1978) has compiled the list of SLA studies which has showed that before 1965 there were seven studies on SLA. It shows that there are scores of studies after that. Since 1978 there have been hundreds of studies conducted (Larsen-Freeman& Long, 1991).

This brief account shows expansion of the field of SLA and the quantity of literature available. Since this study is not aimed at studying the field of SLA and since it is beyond the scope of this section to review the vast literature, it will briefly present the SLA field. Because of the complexity of the issues, different theories of SLA and the divergence of opinion the researchers have on such matters, only the following issues on SLA will be cited: the
definition of SLA, brief historical background, and the three major perspectives of the field pertinent to this study.

2.5.1 Definition

The SLA can be defined as the process by which people develop proficiency in second or foreign language. The term ‘second language acquisition’ has been used particularly by researchers in USA who are interested in:

(a) Longitudinal studies and case studies of the development of syntax and phonology in second and foreign language learners,

(b) Analysis of the spoken word and written discourse of second and foreign language barriers, and

(c) The study of other aspects of language development.

Gass and Selinker (2008, p. 1) define SLA as “the study of how learners create a new language system.” As a research field, they add that SLA is the study of what is learned of a second language and what is not learned.

SLA has been considered as a complex process which involves many factors (Ellis, 1995; Klein, 1986). The term “second language acquisition” also refers to the aspects that are to some extent stable and thus can be generalized. In other words, the learners of the second language acquire the target language in different ways. Hence, the SLA is not uniform (Ellis, 1995). Moreover, SLA
refers to subconscious or conscious processes through which language learners learn a second language in a natural or tutored setting (Ellis, 1987; Krashen, 2009).

2.5.2 Background

The field of SLA has passed through certain phases defined as modes of inquiry. The researchers have utilized those modes for CA, EA, performance analysis, and discourse analysis, in their work (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). As one can say, the influence on the field of SLA took place in 1957 when Chomsky’s *Syntactic Structures* was published. In 1967 Corder’s article, “The Significance of Learner’s Errors,” was published; resulting in the second revolution in the field of SLA.

Corder’s (1967, 1992) article changed the view of the researchers about the learners and their production of a language. Moreover, a basic change took place, because of this article, when language acquisition was viewed in terms of “a set of abstract rules that are internalized and unconscious,” rather than viewing it just as a habit (Seliger, 1988). When the researchers shifted their focus and interests from the teaching process to the learning process, a new research agenda was introduced from the above perspective “learning process,” and the field has been known as SLA. Most of the researchers indicate that the beginning of the SLA was when Corder published his article, mentioned above, in 1967 and reprinted in 1992.
2.5.3 Some Major Perspectives

Few researchers have distinguished between second language “acquisition” (SLA) and second language “learning.” The term “acquisition” means to learn a second language through exposure. The term “learning” means to learn a second language consciously (Krashen, 2009).

The difference between learning, acquisition and concept of the monitoring are the issues debated in the second language theory. The theoretical distinctions between these issues provide keys to the process as a whole (Lessow-Hurley, 1990).

There has been considerable disagreement among the researchers as far as role of the first language (L1) in SLA is concerned. There is a popular belief that SLA is influenced by the learner’s first language (Ellis, 1995). In this regard, Marton (1981) has stated:

From a psychological point of view, there is never peaceful co-existence between two language systems in the learner, but rather constant warfare and that warfare is not limited to the moment of cognition, but continues during the period of strong newly learnt ideas in memory. (p.150)

It is known that some researchers minimized the role of L1 in SLA and that it is a negative one. However, the recent research on “interference” shows the important role of L1 in SLA. It has now been clear that interference of L1 occurs in certain contexts (James, 1980; Zobl, 1983).
The early studies of SLA based on “habit-formation” were described by behaviourist psychology. This theory has dominated discussion of both first language and second language acquisition until the end of the 1960s. It has provided a theoretical account of how the learner’s native language interferes in the process of SLA. It has provided an explanation to the errors made by the second language learner (Ellis, 1995).

The SLA research also has been concerned with the “learner-internal” factors. The learner-internal factors have been based on a theory that was first examined, how a learner acquires knowledge of a language; that is, first language acquisition (Ellis, 1995). This theory had its impact on SLA research. The internal processes were claimed through interlanguage theory which was introduced into the SLA field. It is defined as “the systematic knowledge of language which is independent of both the learner’s L1 and L2 system he is trying to learn” (Ellis, 1995).

The IL has gained from psycholinguistic – as well as sociolinguistic - approaches to enrich the field of SLA, because it is known that learners of the target language make use of cognitive, linguistic and social strategies when social interactions take place (Lessow-Hurley, 1990). SLA has been viewed as a number of evolving systems which consists of the “IL continuum”. Each system has been considered to be consistent; that is, rule-governed and permeable to new rules as well. The continuum has been viewed as a “restructuring continuum” that extends from the learner’s L1 to the L2 (Ellis,
1995). Thus, the above account briefly gives a general review about the “interference” issue in the SLA field.

2.5.4 Distinction between SLA and Foreign Language Learning

The distinction between SLA and foreign language learning focuses on the prevailing learning situation and not directly on the learning process itself. English in Pakistan and India is frequently taken as example of a SL because of its official status. Christophersen (1973) maintains that the distinction between ‘second’ and ‘foreign’ becomes clearer if it is not seen in relation to individual speakers but to the whole community of speakers.

The distinction between foreign language and second language was maintained, without any basis on empirical facts. As long as it is focused on the individual learner and not the community, there surely will be differences between the two, differences to be sought in the contexts in which the individual learner learns the language. The basic issue which is whether the language he/she learns is spoken in his/her immediate environment or not, might be summed up as follows:

In SLA situation the language is spoken in the immediate environment of the learner, who has good opportunities to use the language by participating in natural communication situations. The SLA may or may not be supplemented by classroom teaching. But, in a foreign language learning situation, the language is not spoken in the immediate environment of the learner, although
mass media may provide opportunities for participating in the receptive skills. The learner has little or no opportunity to use the language in natural communication situations. In a bilingual community, one language may be spoken only by a minority and would therefore be frequently heard. In such case, learners even in the same classroom may differ a great deal from one another depending on their contacts with the language being learnt. Some, often the majority, might be foreign language learners, others second language learners or acquirers, and a few borderline cases would probably occur as well. Kees, Wander and Marjolijn (2005) have mentioned that, SLA typically takes place in a setting in which the language to be learned is the language spoken in the local community.

A Yemeni speaker learning English, in America or England, is generally defined as a second language learner. English language for him, even if he is in the country where it is spoken by the majority of the people or it is the official language for that country, will be second language. While a learner from any Arab country grows in a country where English is spoken or it is an official language, English will be the first language for him instead of his original language i.e., (Arabic) and Arabic will become the second language. So the acquisition of that language needs to take place in a non-instructed setting. That means that acquiring a language can be in any place, school, street, or home.

They have also added that foreign language takes place in a setting in which the language to be learned is not the language spoken in the local...
community. So the learning of English by Yemeni or any Arabic adult in his country would be an example of foreign language acquisition/learning. In most cases, foreign language acquisition/learning takes place in a setting with formal language instruction.

Some make the distinction between foreign language learning and second language acquisition (Patten and Benati, 2010). The former is used to refer to language learning in contexts in which the language is not normally spoken outside the classroom, such as learning Arabic in, India or in United States. SLA is used by some to refer to those contexts in which the language is used outside the classroom, as in the case of learning English in India or Malaysia.

2.5.5 First Language

It is generally a person’s mother tongue or the language acquired first. In multilingual communities, however, it is where a child may gradually shift from the main use of one language to the main use of another (e.g. because of the influence of a school language). First language may refer to the language the child feels most comfortable using. Often this term is used synonymously with ‘native language’. First language is also known as L1.

2.5.5.1 First Language Acquisition

It is the process of learning a native language. The first language acquisition (FLA) has been studied primarily by linguists, developmental
psychologists and psycholinguists. Most explanations of how children learn to speak and understand language involve the influence of both the linguistic input to which children are exposed in social interaction with their parents and other caregivers and a natural aptitude for grammar that is unique to humans.

2.5.5.2 Major difference between FLA and SLA

1. Children normally achieve perfect L1 mastery, whereas adult L2 learners are unlikely to achieve perfect L2 mastery.
2. In L1, success is guaranteed, but in L2 learning, complete success is very rare.
3. There is little variation in degree of success or route in L1 learning whereas L2 learners vary in overall success and route.
4. The goals of L1 and L2 learners differ completely. In L1, target language competence is guaranteed but L2 learners may be content with less than target language competence and they may be more concerned with fluency than accuracy.
5. Children develop clear intuitions about correctness in L1, but L2 learners are often unable to form clear grammatical judgments.
6. Correction is not found and not necessary in L1 learners, whereas in L2 learners, correction is generally helpful and necessary.
7. In L1, usually instruction is not needed, but in L2 learning it is necessary. (Ellis, 1994)
Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a great difference between FLA and SLA. Much of second language learning centres on issues of the nature of learnability. FLA is somewhat mastery and relies mostly on innate universal principles of constraints and assumptions, whereas second language learning seems to rely more on cognitive mechanism in order to fashion general problem solving learning strategies to cope with the material. It goes without saying that children naturally acquire their first language, but adults do not naturally acquire their second language, as a number of fundamental differences appear in their rationale towards learning.

2.6 Errors vs. Mistakes

In order to analyze learner’s language in an appropriate perspective, it is crucial to understand the distinction between mistakes and errors. At the level of analysis, deciding whether a deviation is an error or a mistake is a problem. Corder (1967, 1971, 1981) has contended that mistakes should not be included in the quantification or analysis of errors and this is the approach taken by most analysts. According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), mistakes are committed by a learner when writing or speaking and which is caused by lack of attention, fatigue and carelessness. However, errors are made by a learner when writing or speaking and which are caused by incomplete learning. On the other hand, Brown (2007) has said that a mistake refers to performance error that is either a random guess or a ‘slip’ in that it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly. People make mistake in both native and second language situations.
Natives are capable of recognizing and correcting such ‘lapses’ or ‘mistake’. An error, a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflects the competence of the learner. An error cannot be self-corrected, while mistake can be self-corrected if the deviation is pointed out to the speaker (James 1998). Errors occur when the learner does not know the rule and needs to be taught it or when the learner needs to be shown that the wrong knowledge or partial knowledge has been applied to the particular situation.

In his article, “the significance of learner’s errors”, Corder (1967, 1992) has distinguished between errors and mistakes. Mistakes are akin to slips of the tongue and the speaker is able to recognize it as a mistake and correct it. An error is systematic. It is likely to occur repeatedly and it is not recognized by learner. To study any learners’ language, errors must be elaborated to find out how learners make them and how they can be overcome.

In many cases regarding the definition of error in language learning, there has been a reference made to the native speaker’s competence, fluency or knowledge of the language including its rules and their usage and learner forms that do not meet the target language requirements. Some definitions would not now-a-days be completely accepted due to the connotations underlying the idealized models they represent for the learner to imitate, as in Liski & Putnanen (1983) (cited in Lennon, 1991), an error occurs where the speaker fails to follow the pattern or manner of the speech of educated people in English speaking countries today.
On the other hand, Hendrickson (1978) has taken a view on error from the teaching and error correction angle, defining it as “an utterance, form or structure that a particular language teacher deems unacceptable because of its inappropriate use or its absence in real-life discourse” (p.387).

Underlying this definition is the idea that the language teacher is the ultimate decider of what is right or wrong, and thus implies a high degree of subjectivity. This criterion has been undermined somewhat by research, which has shown that there is considerable disagreement by both native speaker and non-native speaker teachers, and non-teachers, concerning the detection and identification of errors. However, it must be said that most researchers whose L1 is the TL of the learners, admit to using their native speaker intuitions and knowledge of the language gained through teaching experience when detecting the errors made by the students.

Lennon (1991) has offered a more cautious definition, describing an error as, “a linguistic form or combination of forms which, in the same context and under similar conditions of production, would, in all likelihood, not be produced by the speaker’s native speaker counterparts (p.182).

In this account, we believe that Lennon makes the relevant reference to context and one, which is pertinent to our later analysis of learner language. It may not be totally accurate however, when considering the phonological system of the native speaker. As an example, we could give the word ‘but’ which in a large area of the northern England would be pronounced as /but/ and whose pronunciation as such would be considered an error if uttered by a
language learner. Not that we imply with this that the students should be taught non-standard forms. It simply goes to prove a point – that many native speaker counterparts will pronounce the word ‘erroneously’.

Chun, Day, Chenoweth, and Luppescu (1982) have used the term error to indicate the use of a linguistic item in a way, which, according to the fluent users of the language, indicates faulty or incomplete learning. Here the NS is not the only model being considered as competent.

Edge (1989) has defined errors as forms that language users cannot correct by themselves even though they have been taught. James (1998) has added that language learners cannot correct their errors until they have additional knowledge of the topic. These errors occur in the course of the learner’s study because they have not acquired enough knowledge. Once they acquire additional knowledge, they will be able to correct their errors and the more errors the learners correct the more conscious they become of the language.

2.7 Sources of Errors

There are three terms which overlap one another. These terms are ‘sources of error’ (Brown, 2007,p.263), ‘types of error’ (Richards, 1992,p.173), and ‘causes of error’ (Norrish, 1990,pp.21-33). To have a clear understanding, the following explanation will be helpful.

In a paper written in 1974, reprinted in 1992, titled “The Study of Learner English” Richards and Simpson have exposed seven sources of errors:
1. Language transfer, to which one third of the deviant sentences from second language learners could be attributed.

2. Intralingual interference: Richards has exposed four types and causes for intralingual errors:
   
   a. Overgeneralization: It is associated with redundancy reduction, covering instances where the learner creates a deviant structure on the basis of his experience of other structures in the TL. 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. Sociolinguistic situation: motivation (instrumental or integrative) and settings for language learning (compound or co-ordinate bilingualism) may affect second 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 one 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 2nd language acquisition. It is concerned with the
inherent difficulty of people 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 is.

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

1. Interlingual: interference happens when “an item or structure in the SL manifests some degree of difference from and some degree of similarity with the equivalent item or structure in the learner’s first language”

2. Intralingual:
   a. Learning strategy-based errors:
      i. False analogy.
      ii. Misanalysis.
      iii. Incomplete rule application.
      iv. Exploiting redundancy.
      v. Overlooking co-occurrence restrictions.
      vi. Hypercorrection (monitor overuse).
      vii. Overgeneralization or system simplification.
   b. Communication strategy-based errors:
      i. Holistic strategies: e.g. approximation, language switch,
      ii. Analytic strategies: circum-locution (expressing the concept indirectly, by allusion rather than by direct reference.
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 (interlingual errors)

   a. Material induced errors.
   b. Teacher-talk induced errors.
   c. Exercise-based induced errors.
   d. Errors induced by pedagogical priorities.
   e. Look-up errors.

According to Dulay & Burt (1974, 1992, p.115), there are four types of “goofs”:

1. Interference-like goofs, those that reflect native language structure, and are not found in L1 acquisition data of the target language.
2. L1 Developmental goofs, those that do not reflect native language structure but are found in L1 acquisition data of the target language.
3. Ambiguous goofs those that can be categorized as either interference-like or L1 developmental goofs.
4. Unique goofs those that do not reflect L1 structure, and are also found in L1 acquisition data of the target language. (Either interference-like nor L1 developmental goofs).

Norrish (1983, pp.21-26) has classified causes of error into three types that is carelessness, first language interference and translation. The three types of causes of error will be discussed briefly below.
1) Carelessness

Carelessness is often closely related to lack of motivation. Many teachers will admit that it is not always the student’s fault if he loses interest, perhaps the materials and/or style of presentation did not suit him.

2) First language interference

Norrish has stated that learning a language (a mother tongue or a foreign language) is a matter of habit formation. When someone tries to learn new habits, the old ones interfere with the new ones. This cause of error is called first language interference.

3) Translation

Translation is one of the causes of errors. This happens because a student translates his FL sentence or idiomatic expression into the TL, word by word. This is probably the most common cause of error.

Another expert who discusses the sources of error is Richards (1971). In his article “Error Analysis and Second Language Strategies”, he classifies the sources of errors into:

(1) Interference, that is errors resulting from the transfer of grammatical and/or stylistic elements from the source language to the TL;

(2) Overgeneralization, that is errors caused by extension of TL rules to areas where they do not apply;

(3) Performance errors, that is unsystematic errors that occur as the result of such thing as memory lapses, fatigue, confusion, or strong emotion;
(4) Markers of transitional competence, that is errors that result from a natural and perhaps inevitable development sequence in the SL learning process (analogous to FL acquisition);

(5) Strategy of communication and assimilation, that is errors resulting from the attempt to communicate in the TL without having completely acquired the grammatical form necessary to do so; and

(6) Teacher-induced errors, which are errors resulting from pedagogical procedures contained in the text or employed by the teacher.

Generally speaking, the above sources of errors in learning a new language can be summarized into two main sources i.e., interlingual and intralingual sources.

### 2.8 Interlingual and Intralingual

Interlingual and intralingual interference have been in the center of the L2 research for a very long time. The period when the influence of interlingual interference on SLA was overestimated (Weinerich 1953, Lado, 1957) was followed by a period which was dominated by the Creative Construction Hypothesis of Dulay and Burt (1975 and later), who claimed that most errors are developmental and that interlingual interference has a minimal effect on SLA. In the seventies and eighties, the situation developed towards a more balanced approach towards the interference phenomena, admitting that both interlingual and intralingual interference play an important role in SLA, though their influence may differ depending on various factors, e.g., language
proficiency. The interference is not seen any longer as a mechanical transfer of FL features or structures into the SL, but rather viewed as a complex cognitive mechanism underlying SLA.

### 2.8.1 Interlingual Transfer (interference)

It is a significant source for language learners. Richards and Schmidt (2002) have defined this term as the result of language transfer, caused by the learners FL. However, this should not be confused with behavioristic approach of language transfer.

The EA does not regard them as the persistence of old habits, but rather as signs that the learner is internalizing and investigating the system of the new language.

Interlingual errors may occur at different levels such as transfer of phonological, grammatical and lexica-semantic elements of the native language into TL. These different levels can be explained with possible errors committed by Yemeni students. At phonological level, the sounds that do not occur in Arabic cause the students to mispronounce some sounds. They attempt to pronounce /p/ of pin as /b/ of bin or /v/ of van as /f/ of fan.

At morphological level, Yemeni learners tend to add the plural suffix at the end of the verb as Arabic when the subject is plural.

* They plays.
* We reads.
* You cleans.
While they omit the marker of present ‘s’ at the end of the verb when the subject is third person singular (he/she/it).

*He go.

*She play.

*It eat.

Another example of the interlingual errors caused by the learner’s native language is Yemeni learners may produce the sentence ‘I have bag black’ instead of ‘I have a black bag’ because they follow the Arabic word order that permits the noun to produce the adj.

To sum up, Corder 1967 (cited in Brown in 2007) wrote ‘a learner’s errors are significant in that they provide the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in the discovery of the language’.

While Cook (1992) has stated that, the L1 is present in the minds L2 learners, whether the teacher wants it to be there or not. The L2 knowledge that is being created in them is connected in all respects with the knowledge of L1. As a result, he has suggested that when working with L2, the learners must not treat L2 in isolation from L1.

2.8.2. Intralingual Errors/Transfer and Developmental Errors

Richard (1971, 1992) has defined intralingual errors as those “which reflect the general characteristics of rules learning, such as faulty overgeneralization, incomplete application of rules and failure to learn
conditions under which use rules apply”(p.174). He has added that this term refers to items produced by the learner, which reflect not the structure of the mother tongue, but generalizations based on partial exposure to the TL. While Brown (2007) has made a distinction between interlingual and intralingual interference as, the interlingual errors of interference are from the native language, while the intralingual errors are from within the target language, in the context of learning and communication strategies.

Interferences from the students’ own language is not the only reason for committing errors. As Ellis (1997) has stated, some errors seem to be universal, reflecting the attempts of learners to make the task of learning and using the TL simpler. Use of past tense suffix ‘ed’ for all verbs is an example of simplification and overgeneralization. These errors are common in the speech of SL learners, irrespective of their mother tongue.

Intralingual errors result from faulty or partial learning of the TL rather than language transfer. Intralingual errors are further subdivided into (Richards, 1971, 1992):

1. Overgeneralization errors (e.g. the learner creates a deviant structure on the basis of other structures in L2).

2. Ignorance of rule restrictions (e.g. the learner uses rules in contexts where they do not apply).

3. Incomplete application of rules (e.g. the learner fails to fully develop a structure).
4. False concepts hypothesized (e.g. the learner does not fully comprehend a distinction in L2).

They may be caused by the influence of one TL item on that of the other. For example, learners attempt to use two tense markers at the same time in one sentence since they have not mastered the language yet. When they say:

*He is comes today.

It is because the singularity of the third person singular ‘is’ in present progress and ‘s’ at the end of a verb in simple present tense.

*He can swims well.

2.9 Types of Errors

According to Dulay, Burt, Krashen (1982,p. 155) and Ellis (1994,55), there are four types or errors based on the surface strategy, namely taxonomy, omission, addition, misformation (selection) and misordering (word order).

2.9.1 Omission Error

The omission errors are one of the characteristics of L2 learners in general and Arab learners of English in particular. Dulay et al. (1982,p.154) has held that “omission errors are characterized by the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance”. Accordingly, when the Arab learners commit an omission error, they actually omit an element which is essential, without which the sentence is ill-formed or ungrammatical. Consider the following examples.
For example:

1. Yemen nice country.

2. Ahmed wants play football.

In utterance (1) the student omits a linking verb and an indefinite article "a" for "Yemen is a nice country", while in utterance (2), the word "to" is omitted for "Ahmed wants to play football". The “to” joins the two verbs.

2.9.2 Addition Error

Dulay et al. (1982, p.156) has stated that “addition errors are the opposite of omission. They are characterized by the presence of an item which must not appear in a well-formed utterance”. He has added that addition errors indicate that “some basic rules have been acquired but the refinements have not yet been made.”

Addition errors usually occur in the late stages of L2 acquisition, when the learners have already acquired some TL rules. In fact, addition errors result from the all-too-faithful use of certain rules.

The following sample exemplifies the issue of addition:

1- I am like learning English.

2- I must to teach English.
In utterance (1) the student adds a linking verb "am" for "I like leaning English", while in utterance (2) the word "to" is added for "I must teach English". The students add the word “to” to join two verbs while the modal verb must be followed by infinitive without "to".

2.9.3 Misformation (selection)

Semantic error is to be a spelling or typing or selecting that turns an intended word into another word of the language. Errors identified in the section are a matter of lexical choice. For the most part, they are the result of relating L2 words to already learned L2 words. What is meant by this category is those errors which are made when the students get confused about lexical items that are usually categorized as “relational opposites” (Laufer, 1997). For instance, the use of look and feel in *I look happy and *He feels happy respectively where the correct counterparts of such examples are I feel happy and He looks happy respectively.

Misformation errors are characterized by the use of the unacceptable forms of the morpheme or structure. Selection errors occur when the wrong item has been chosen in place of the right one in a grammatical utterance (Corder 1981). Although in selection errors, the learner provides the sentence with either a definite or indefinite article, it is incorrect, unlike omission errors where the item is completely omitted.
2.9.4 Misordering (Word Order)

Misordering errors are characterized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance. Misordering errors occur systematically for both L2 and L1 learners in constructions that have already been acquired.

2.9.5 Simplification

It can be described as generalization of rules of the TL through the broadening of their range of application and through the disregard of rules for restricted applicability. Orlowksi (1971) has mentioned the fact that simplification involves two universal processes; children have the tendency to apply overgeneralization to simplify the rules of the TL; while the older generation has a predisposition to limiting the rules of the TL as a result of pressure and sociolinguistic environment.

2.9.6 Fragment

A sentence fragment is a word group that is attempting to function as a sentence but lacking independent clause. In some circumstances, they can be easy to notice, but when placed in related sentences, it can become more difficult. Some fragments are incomplete because they lack either a subject or a verb or both. The fragments, that most students have trouble with, however, are dependent clauses—they have a subject and a verb, so they look like complete sentences, but they don't express a complete thought. They are called "dependent" because they cannot stand on their own. A complete sentence may
contain additional information or details in the main part of the sentence (the independent clause, which can stand “independently,” or by itself) or in a supplemental part (the dependent clause, which “depends” on another part of the sentence for its meaning and cannot stand alone). Sentences can vary in length from a few words to many lines of text. The length is not a reliable indicator of a complete sentence. Below are some examples of fragment sentences in which the fragment is frequently a dependent clause. These clauses begin with one of the marker words (because, when, if) and these dependent clauses must be joined to another clause, in order to avoid creating a sentence fragment.

2.9.7 Structure of Sentence

A sentence is basically a group of words which are tied together and convey an idea, event or description. The words in an English sentence have a certain order and rules regarding the ways to either expand or shorten it. The boundaries of a sentence are easily recognized, as it begins with a capital letter and ends with a terminal punctuation mark (period, question mark or exclamation point). It is important for English writers to know the language of sentence and grammar in order to be able to analyze and develop their writing.

2.9.8 Subject-Verb Agreement

The subject-verb agreement is a grammatical rule that states that the verb must agree in number with its subject. According to Greenbaum and
Nelson (2002) the verb agrees with its subject in number and person. On the other hand, Huddleston and Pullum (2007) mention that subject-verb agreement involves person as well as number, for 1st person I, although singular, requires eat, not eats. Eats occurs with 3rd person singular subjects and eat with all others. The agreement applies whenever the verb displays distinction in person and number. In English, present tense verbs change to show agreement in the third person singular form (subjects represented by the pronouns he, she, it) by adding an ‘s’ or ‘es’. Verbs must agree with their subjects in person and number. Number agreement refers to whether the noun subject is singular or plural ‘There is many books’.

The subject is “many books” does not agree with the verb “is” in number which must be “are”. By person agreement, it is meant errors which result from disagreement between the subject and the verb in person as in *He never watch English movies, where the subject he and the verb watch do not agree in person, viz. while the subject is in third person singular, the verb is not.

2.10 Importance of Errors in the Classroom

The essence of teaching the learning process is imparting knowledge aimed at bringing about positive changes in the learners. When errors thus occur or are noticed in the classroom, they help in complementing the teaching-learning process. Errors serve the following purposes.
First, errors serve as a subtle means of evaluation of the teaching-learning act to determine its success or otherwise. If students commit more errors during the course of or at the end of the lesson, in some aspect of the language, it shows that the objective set out by the teacher has not been achieved. On the contrary, if fewer errors are committed, the teacher is encouraged to build more on what the learners have learnt, after he has corrected the errors exhibited.

Another important factor is that the errors made in the classroom call for corrections and the errors corrected (by the teacher) and those noted (by the students) become part of the learners’ repertoire. It indicates that the learner is gradually inching toward some level of perfection in the language.

Errors help the teacher identify the learners’ problem areas. In other word, through the errors committed by learners, the teacher can actually identify the areas where learners are still having problem. The teacher can then refocus his attention on such areas where the learners are having problems and find appropriate solution. When errors are committed in the classroom, the teacher is helped to examine himself and to probably adjust his method of teaching to cope with the learning needs of his pupils. The resourcefulness of the teacher will go a long way in helping him fashion out better approaches to teach the pupils.

The classroom errors show the vulnerability of the learners of L2. The teacher is aware of the sources of the errors his learners commit. The effects of L1 on the L2 are thus confirmed by the errors that are traceable to L1. The
teacher can then ensure that the difference in the two systems do not constitute a barrier to the learners’ acquisition of the L2.

The errors equally bring out the best in the teacher. For him to be able to correct the errors of his learners, he has to be on his toes. He must be ever busy reading, preparing himself ahead of his learners. In addition, if he must continue to enjoy the respect of his learners and be relevant, he has to be constantly up and doing.

2.11 Previous Studies about Analyzing Learner’s Language

2.11.1 Studies of Errors Made by Non-Arabic Speaking Learners of English

These kinds of errors have been discussed mainly within the framework in which the learners’ performance suggests their use of learning strategies that are similar to those used in FL acquisition.

French (1949) studied different types of errors made by learners of nine different languages and discovered that the majority of the errors was uniform in nature, which led him to conclude that learners’ errors are not caused by their native languages but rather by the TL itself. He has refuted the assumption that native language interference is the cause of most errors and hypothesized that most errors are made due to the intricacies of the TL and the learners’ cognitive styles of learning.

Aguas (1964) studied errors in English compositions made by Tagalog speakers. He has concluded that the first language interference is the greatest
single cause of errors and that CA can be used to predict to a very large extent those errors which arise from negative transfer from first language, though it does not predict errors which arise from a false analogy among linguistic elements in SL.

Wakeham (1965) compared errors made by Filipino college freshers with those committed by native speakers of English and has found that the errors made by non-native speakers were different from those by native speakers of English.

Duskova (1969) has analyzed that the written English of a group of Czech adult learners of English and has stipulated that the learners’ confusion of the systems and subsystems of English is the main cause of errors. Her analysis of the syntactic errors has revealed that the following are the problematic areas:

a. Malformation, which includes such errors as omission of plural endings, lack of subject-verb agreement and omission of the third person singular verb endings ‘s’

b. Modal verbs.

c. Tense.

d. Article.

e. Word order.

She has also found that first language interference causes the major part of students’ errors.

Richards (1971) has collected speech samples elicited from two subjects whose source language are French and Czech. He has found out that of
47 errors made, 25 can be attributed to interference from the mother tongue, 17 to interference from the TL due to overgeneralization and three are performance errors. He has concluded that interference from the source language is the most detectable kind of interference traceable to certain structures, particularly in linguistic areas. In another study using a non-contrastive approach to EA, Richards (1971) has found that “interference from the mother tongue is clearly a major source of difficulty in SL learning and contrastive proves valuable in locating areas of interlingual interference” (p.214).

In a study investigating the difficulty in SL learning, Tran (1972) has reported the following:

Interference from the source language is the greatest source of error, accounting for approximately 51% of the total number of errors. The second important source of interference is the systemic complexity of the TL itself, which accounts for 27% of the total number of errors; the subtler the distinctions within the subsystem, the more difficult they are for the learner. (p. 142)

Wyatt (1973) has studied the errors in the compositions of a group of Ugandan secondary school students. The most frequent errors are made in (a) sentence structure, (b) verbs, (c) articles, and (d) preposition.

Jain (1974) has analyzed the written compositions of Indian University students. In order to identify the potential error-causing learning and teaching strategies, he had focused on errors which were independent of native language
interference. He distinguished between ‘systematic’ and ‘nonsystematic’ errors. As suggested by the name, systematic errors reflected a consistent system and appeared to be the construction rules employed by the learners. Such errors were observed in (a) the use of countable and uncountable nouns, (b) verbal aspects and (c) word order. Nonsystematic errors, on the other hand, are caused by the learners’ inability to apply a rule of English grammar with certainty. Examples of such errors were in the use of (a) article, (b) prepositions, and (c) tense.

Similarly, Lo Coco (1975) and Taylor (1975) have found a high incidence of interlingual errors in the word order of their adult subjects. Dommergues and Lane (1976) in an EA study involving French and English have found that the speakers of French learning English made redundancy and omission errors in the articles following its use and non-use in French. In her report of a study of composition errors made by Afghanistan ESL students, Ross (1976) has found that 68.4% errors resulted from failure to use the appropriate grammatical structures which expressed the distinction in meaning made in English grammar but not observed in the source language. Merio (1978), in a study about interference errors has reported that as much as 58.7% of the errors made by Swedish speaking students learning Finnish can be attributed to the influence of the primary language on the secondary one.

The studies reviewed above indicate certain areas of English grammar that are problematic to learners regardless of their language background and
years of English instruction. The areas of difficulty have consistently been in the verb (including tense, the auxiliary, omission of main verbs, etc.), the definiteness/indefiniteness concept related to the use of articles, prepositions, and the notion of plurality.

Ying (1987) has examined 120 Taiwanese EFL learners’ compositions and has sorted out errors on the basis of three criteria: overgeneralization, simplification and language transfer. A total of 1,250 errors were detected in the 120 compositions, among which 78.9% of the errors were a result of language transfer, 13.6% were overgeneralization of the TL and 7.5% were forms of simplification.

Chiang (1993) has examined types of errors of 160 compositions written by senior high school students in Taiwan. The low proficient group wrote mainly in simple sentences. As far as global errors were concerned, the three most commonly made errors were conjunctions, run-on sentences and subject-objects-complements. The investigation of learning strategies showed that language transfer accounted for 70.58% of all the errors.

Liu (1999) has conducted a study of lexical and grammatical collocational errors from 127 copies of students’ final examination papers and 94 copies of students’ compositions. The majority of the errors were attributed to negative interlingual transfer and four kinds of intralingual transfer, among which ignorance of rule restrictions resulted in more errors than the other three.
Huang (2001) has investigated the nature and distribution of different kinds of grammatical errors made by 46 English majors of a Taiwanese university. A total of 1700 errors were found and categorized into 13 error types. The top six common errors were (1) verb (2) Noun (3) spelling (4) article (5) preposition and (6) word choice. Overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, simplification, incomplete application of rules and L1 transfer were reported as the major causes of EFL learners’ errors.

Chan (2004) has investigated writing errors made by 710 Hong Kong Chinese ESL learners at different proficiency levels with the focus on error types, namely (a) lack of control of the copula (b) incorrect placement of adverbs (c) inability to use the ‘there be’ structure for expressing the existential or presentative function (d) failure to use the relative clause and (e) confusion in verb transitivity. The results showed confirmatory evidence for syntactic transfer from Chinese to English with regard to the five syntactic patterns selected for experimentation and the extent of syntactic transfer was particularly large for complex target structures and among learners of a lower proficiency level.

Huang (2006) has presented an analysis of 34 Taiwanese English majors writing errors based on a web-based writing program, which included error categories of grammar, mechanics, style and usage. The distribution of errors was usage (55%), mechanics (20%), style (16%) and grammar (9%). Huang concluded that most of EFL students’ writing errors were not due to
insufficient command of linguistic complexity. On the contrary, they made many basic errors such as the subject-verb agreement or incomplete sentences.

Olsen (1999) has carried out research in English written by Norwegian EFL learners. The results have showed that less proficient learners had a higher number of grammatical, orthographic and syntactic errors, which can be attributed to cross-linguistic influence.

Connell (2000) has analyzed the kinds of errors Japanese students made. The results have showed that the use of subject in a sentence, the parts of speech and general word order created more problems than other grammatical aspects.

Thananart (2000: pp 88-101) has examined errors in comparison and contrast paragraphs written by EFL university students at Chulalongkorn University. The results showed that the vast majority of errors were grammatical structure (73.86%) and the other types of errors were errors in using translation signals (10.01%) verb forms (7.68%), word choice (6.90%) and spelling (1.55%). Studies on written works of Malaysian ESL learners have shown that their writings are full of mistakes.

Sereebenjabol (2003) has conducted a study to analyze the main types and frequency of errors to determine their probable. The results showed that the most frequent errors occurred in the categories of syntax, lexis, morphology and orthography respectively. The results also showed the local errors were the
use of subordinators and conjunctions. The probable causes could be carelessness, incomplete application of rules.

Sattayatham and Honsa, (2007) have researched to identify the most frequent errors of first year medical students in Thailand. The results showed that the most frequent errors were at the syntactic and lexical levels which led to overgeneralization, incomplete rule application and building of false concepts. According to the study, mother tongue interference was detected as major cause of errors. However, some linguistic items such as articles, tense and verb forms appeared to be the source of frequent errors.

The following studies have been cited in Darus (2009):

Khan (2005) has carried out a research among 30 form five students found that most of the students are weak in grammar. Lim Ho Peng (1976) stated that there are several general types of recurrent errors in learners such as spelling mistakes, wrong use of prepositions, confusing use of structural verbs, concord and tense. Azimat (1998) has carried out an EA on 30 students (Form one). The result has showed that they committed many errors in tenses and prepositions other than subject-verb agreement. Vahdatinejat (2008) has found in his study that students committed errors in tenses, word choices (selection) and prepositions.
According to James (1988), errors in writing such as tenses, prepositions and weak vocabulary are the most common and frequent types of errors that are committed by learners.

Richards (1992) has studied types of errors in the acquisition of English as SL which were not derived from transfer from the mother tongue. He supported what Dulay & Burt (1974) have found, in that the developmental errors were frequent regardless of learners’ backgrounds. These errors reflect the general characteristics of rules for learning such as overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules and hypothesizing false concepts. Later researchers such as Ghadessy (1980) and Ngara (1983), who have found that developmental errors rather than interference errors were a major source of error in L2 acquisition, supported his findings.

Dulay & Burt (1974) have conducted a study to determine the causes of syntactic errors made by children in learning ESL. Unlike the study by Politzer and Ramirez (1973), the errors were classified into three categories: (1) developmental errors—errors that are similar to L1 acquisition errors; (2) interference errors—errors that reflect mother tongue structure; and (3) unique errors—errors that are neither developmental nor interference. They found that the developmental cognitive strategies accounted for most errors the children made; that is, the children tended to make errors that were similar to their first language acquisition errors.
2.11.2 Studies of Errors made by Arabic-speaker Learners of English

Not many studies have investigated errors in the written compositions of Arabic-speaking learners of English.

Scott & Tucker (1974) have studied errors made by Arabic-speaking students in their speech and writing. The errors were classified into fourteen types: verbs, prepositions, articles, relative clauses, sentential complements, repetition of subject or object, nouns, pronouns, surrogate subjects, word order, quantifiers, adverbs, adjectives, and genitive constructions. From their findings, verbs, prepositions, and articles were major sources of errors. The errors were explained in terms of performance mistakes, mother-tongue interference, or false intralingual analogy.

English language learners are likely to face difficulties during their learning the grammar of the TL, in the case of the differences between it and the mother tongue.

Samhoury (1966) has analyzed the grammatical errors in the written English of two hundred Syrian University students in order to provide a partial basis for preparing English teaching materials. He has reported errors in word order, verb formation, tense, sequence of tense, prepositions and articles. His subjects’ reliance on the native language was very extensive. However, the fact that he has not reported and figured his subjects’ errors or the frequency of
their occurrence gives the researcher reason to believe that Samhoury’s study was more of a CA than EA.

Willcott (1972) has studied the errors of sixteen native speakers of Arabic taking a course in history at the University of Texas at Austin. The objective of his study was to find out some of the students’ unique problems with the syntax of written English in order to develop efficient teaching materials. Willcott’s study has showed that the most serious problems for this group of learners were those with the concept of definiteness and verb morphology.

Kambal (1980) has analyzed syntactic errors in compositions written by first year Sudanese students at Khartoum University. His subjects experienced most difficulty with verbs, tense, concord, articles and prepositions. He explained these errors in terms of both native language interference and the influence of the systems of the TL itself.

Al-Haq (1982) has investigated the syntactical errors in compositions by 96 secondary cycle male and female students in urban and rural schools. He has showed that there were no significant differences between males and females with respect to noun-phrase and verb-phrase errors, except for prepositions, particles and tense. There were significant differences between urban and rural students with respect to the definite article, prepositions and particles. He ascribed these errors to mother tongue interference, overgeneralization, performance, ignorance of rules usage, restriction, formation and developmental errors.
Tahineh (2008) has investigated the kind of errors that the Jordanian university students made in the use of English prepositions. Data was taken from free compositions by 162 students with similar educational, linguistic, and sociolinguistic background. The study has revealed that MT interference is the major source of Jordanian EFL learners’ errors and transfer strategies of TL constituted a major part of the errors.

Al-Naimi (1989) has conducted a study concerning the errors committed in adjectives of English by Arab EFL learners. It was found that interference accounts for the wide range of errors in adjective formation, selection and comparison. The Sample consisted of 150 students enrolled in the classes of the Orientation Program of the language Centre.

Hazaymeh (1994) has conducted a study to investigate the secondary students’ errors in learning English verb tenses. The sample of the study comprised (587) students from public schools and (172) students from private schools. Both male and female students were involved in his study. Students were selected randomly from secondary schools in the city of Irbid/Jordan. He found that there were statistically significant differences between public and private students, male and female students, scientific and literary students with respect to their errors in using the English verb tenses. The researcher has attributed the errors made by the students undertaken in his study to the following reasons: mother tongue interference, overgeneralization, the complexity of the structures of the English verb tenses, a strategy of parallel structure, and ignorance of grammatical rules.
Miqdadi (1997) has investigated the effect of relative clauses of Arabic on learning English. He found that the effect of negative transfer from Arabic on English regarding the errors committed by the students in the formation of relative clauses of English was very clear. The sample of the study consisted of 100 female and male, first and second year students at the English Department of Yarmouk University.

2.12 Conclusion

Despite the fact that the findings of the studies reviewed earlier, this study may strengthen the assumption that the intricacies of English, and not the learner’s native language, are the cause of most errors. At the same time it would be unreasonable to entirely exclude the possibility of native language interference.