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SIMPLIFICATION STRATEGIES IN LEARNERS OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Resumo

A presente pesquisa trata de três tipos de er-
ros de simplificação encontrados em testes escritos
feitos por estudantes de inglês como língua estrangei-
ra. Estes erros são: a ausência de inflecções indican-
do o presente e o passado simples e a omissão de in-
versão em perguntas. Observamos que estes erros ocor-
rem com uma freqüência muito maior em testes envolven-
do a comunicação de significado tais como composições
e traduções, do que em testes relaciondos com a parte
mecânica da língua, tais como testes de transformação
e identificação de erros. Esta diferença foi observada
em cada aluno individualmente.

Assim sendo nós nos propusemos a analisar os
conceitos de competência e desempenho a fim de deter-
minar até que ponto essas variações individuais são
levadas em conta. Analisamos conceitos de sistemas
aproximativos e de interlíngua e os processos que cons-
tituem a base para o aprendizado de uma língua estran-
geira. Para tanto, limitamos o campo desta pesquisa

para o fenômeno da simplificação e demos exemplos de *pidgin English.*

Examinamos os conceitos de erros, seus vários tipos e fontes e explicamos as várias causas dos erros tratados nesta pesquisa. Concluímos que existe um processo de aprendizagem de línguas comum a todos os três: a estratégia de comunicação no segundo idioma. Constatamos que quando o aluno está estudando a língua estrangeira apenas com o propósito de se comunicar, no momento em que julga ter atingido seu objetivo, esta estratégia faz com que sua motivação em dominar as regras gramaticais do idioma estrangeiro decaia. É este processo que explica a maior frequência dos três tipos de erros de simplificação em testes escritos onde a atenção do aluno está mais voltada para o conteúdo do que para a forma.

Concluímos que, mesmo tendo encontrado a origem destes erros e explicações para a diferença de frequência de erros no próprio indivíduo, não encontramos um modelo que trate destas variações individuais de desempenho de tal modo a solucionar o problema de avaliação encontrado pelo professor de língua estrangeira.

ABSTRACT

This research is concerned with three types of simplification errors which occurred in written tests performed by learners of English as a foreign language: the omission of simple present and past tense inflections and the absence of inversion in questions. We have observed that these errors occur with much higher frequency in tests involving communication of meaning, i.e., compositions and translations, than in those just involving form (the mechanics of the language); i.e., transformation and error identification tests, this difference observed within individual learners.

On account of this we proposed to analyse concepts of competence and performance in order to determine the extent to which these individual variabilities in performance are accounted for. We examined the concepts of approximative systems and interlanguage and the processes which underlie foreign language learning. From these we narrowed the field of our studies to the phenomenon of simplification, and gave

examples of pidginized English.

We examined the concepts of error, its various types and sources, and went on to explain the various sources of the three types of simplification errors relevant to this research. We have found that there is a process of language learning underlining all three of them: the strategy of second language communication. If the learner is studying the language for communicative purposes only, the moment he feels his goal (communication) is achieved, this strategy makes his motivation to master the target language rules decrease. It is this strategy that explains the higher frequency of the three types of simplification errors in written activities where the learner's attention is shifted to content rather than on form.

However, even though we have found the sources of these errors and explanations for the difference in their frequency among individual learners, we were not able to encounter a model which related individual performance variations in such a way as to solve the teacher's problem with evaluation.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. PRESENTATION OF THE THEME AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Many studies have been made on simplification concerning social dialects. However teachers of English as a foreign language are frequently facing the problem of pidginization in the classroom.

Although simplification strategies in a formal teaching situation can be considered a normal process for both the child and the adult beginner learning the foreign language, simplified features seem to make part of intermediate and advanced level learners' performance as well, and here lies our concern.

1.2. THE PROBLEM

Intermediate and advanced learners of English as a foreign language may have simplified grammatical

features present in their target language performance.
Now, this performance varies from individual to individual, and it may also vary within the same individual according to the type of task he is asked to do.

Before continuing, it is important to state that we are limiting the study of simplified grammatical features to inflections on verbs (more precisely the simple present and simple past inflections), and simplification of auxiliaries related to inversion in questions. Simplification regarding these three grammatical topics occurs with high frequency in our Brazilian learners. The point which has called our attention is that this frequency varies within the same individual: the frequency of the omission of the simple present and the past inflections and the absence of inversion in questions is much higher when the learner is concentrating on communicating meanings, ideas, feelings and attitudes by means of written essays or translations than when he is involved in written activities requiring only the formal knowledge of the target language. In this latter case the same intermediate or advanced level learner who had often *forgotten* to inflect and to invert while writing his essays may much more frequently *remember* to inflect in the simple present and simple past tenses and to invert the auxiliary in questions.

1.2.1. ILLUSTRATION OF THE PROBLEM

In order to illustrate the problem we shall give below examples taken from learners' written production. Two of these are pragmatic, involving communication strategies i.e., the learner's attention is focused on content because he has to express his ideas and attitudes; the other two written tasks require the learner's attention to be focused on form rather than on content and meaning. The level of our learners in these examples ranges from three to one semesters before taking the Cambridge First Certificate examination.

Compositions

...and she goes to work, she works four hours, than she cames home and makes the lunch, after that she goes back to work and she finish work at 5 o'clock. She goes shopping and buy a lot of things...she give him the supper, let him watch TV and at 8 o'clock she puts him...

...when I arrived home, I went to the kitchen and eat the dessert. At a quarter to one I begin to study piano, and I studied it till half past one.

The two examples quoted above come from the same learner, who was taking the First Certificate Examination the following semester. Examining his performance in relation to the simple present and simple

past inflection one can assume that this inconsistency in the use of the -s and -ed morphemes bears great resemblance to the language used by speakers of Black English (illustrated in the second part of our research). Continuing with our examples:

> *'Mary why did you come so late?'*
> *'Well mother, the party was very good and the girl whom I was coming to didn't want to came early.'*
> *'But why you didn't phone me? I was becaming nervous...'*

One can observe the same type of inconsistency concerning invertion in questions. If the learner never makes use of inverted questions one is led to the assumption that he has not mastered the rules to do so but this random use of inversion and inflection in essays and translations and the lower frequency of these types of error in other types of test (illustrated in the following pages) makes us suggest that there is more to it than saying that the learner knows or does not know or is not totally sure of the rules for these grammatical features in question.

Translation

1.

a. Ele sempre me manda flores.
   He always send me flowers.

b. Pedro trabalha na cidade.
   Peter work in the country.

c. Por que ela não vende o carro?
   Why didn't she sell the car?

...

2.

a. João nunca visitou minha mãe.
   John never visit my mother.

b. Por quanto tempo você morou no Canadã?
   How long do you live in Canada?

c. Por que sua namorada não veio?
   Why your girlfriend don't came?

d. Ele comeu chocolate ontem.
   He ate chocolate yesterday.

...

3.

a. Quando ele voltou de Paris?
   When he returned from Paris?

b. Quantos presentes ele estava comprando para você?
   How many presents he was buying to you?

c. Seu amigo escreveu isto esta tarde?
   Your friend wrote this these afternoon?

...

Examining this learner's written performance in essays and translations one might argue that it is simply a matter that the learner has been placed in the wrong group - that he should be at a much lower level. Before agreeing let us examine two non-pragmatic

tests   - produced by this same learner.

1. (Put the verbs in brackets in the simple present tense).

They <u>build</u> (build) houses that cost a lot.

My friend <u>works</u> (work) in London; he <u>buys</u> (buy) and <u>sells</u> (sell) cars.

I <u>sit</u> (sit) at the window and <u>watch</u> (watch) the traffic.

My daughter <u>thanks</u> (thank) me when she <u>receives</u> (receive) a present.

...

2. (Put the correct form of the verb in brackets).

Colombus <u>discovered</u> (discover) America more than 400 years ago.

My brother <u>wrote</u> (write) me last week.

She <u>learnt</u> (learn) how to play the violin in 1977.

...

3. (Make questions according to the examples (examples are given).

Peter has been <u>to London</u>. Where <u>has Peter been</u>?

Mary was painting <u>the ceiling</u>. What <u>was Mary painting</u>?

My hat cost <u>£1</u>. How much <u>cost your hat</u>?

I spent <u>three weeks</u> at the seaside.

How long <u>did you spend at the seaside</u>?

...

It is important to point out that in order to illustrate our problem we have numbered our test, nº 1 being related the simple present tense inflection, nº 2 the simple past tense inflection and nº 3 inversion in questions. However, in the actual tests all the sentences were mixed up.

Error Identification test (some of these sentences have mistakes. Indicate which by correcting those you think are wrong).

1.

Robert go to the cinema every Saturday.

<u>Robert goes to the cinema every Saturday.</u>

Why she don't sell the car?

<u>Why doesn't she sell the car?</u>

He have a bath every day.

<u>He has a bath every day.</u>

. . .

2.

They travel to London yesterday.

<u>They traveld to London yesterday.</u>

Last night I study for my music class.

<u>I studied for my music class last night.</u>

John never visited my mother.

_____

. . .

3.

Why she don't sell the car?

Why doesn't she sell the car?

When she arrived from Japan?

When did she arrive from Japan?

What did you see on TV yesterday?

. . .

These examples were taken from one individual learner to illustrate how his performance regarding these three types of error varies according to the kind of test. In a addition to this we have prepared a graph to demonstrate our problem. This graph comprises five intermediate level groups (from three to one semesters before taking the Cambridge First certificate Examination in this case) whose learners have been asked to do these four types of tests as part of their normal class-assessment program.

The continuous line in the graph represents the three simplification errors we are engaged with (omission of -s, past inflection and of inversion in questions) in pragmatic tests (compositions and translations) and the broken line represents these errors in non-pragmatic tests (transformation and error identification). We can see that the continuous line repre-

fp

100

80

60

S
T
U 40
D
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N
T 20
S

0

—— pragmatic tests
--- non-pragmatic tests

10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90   100   %
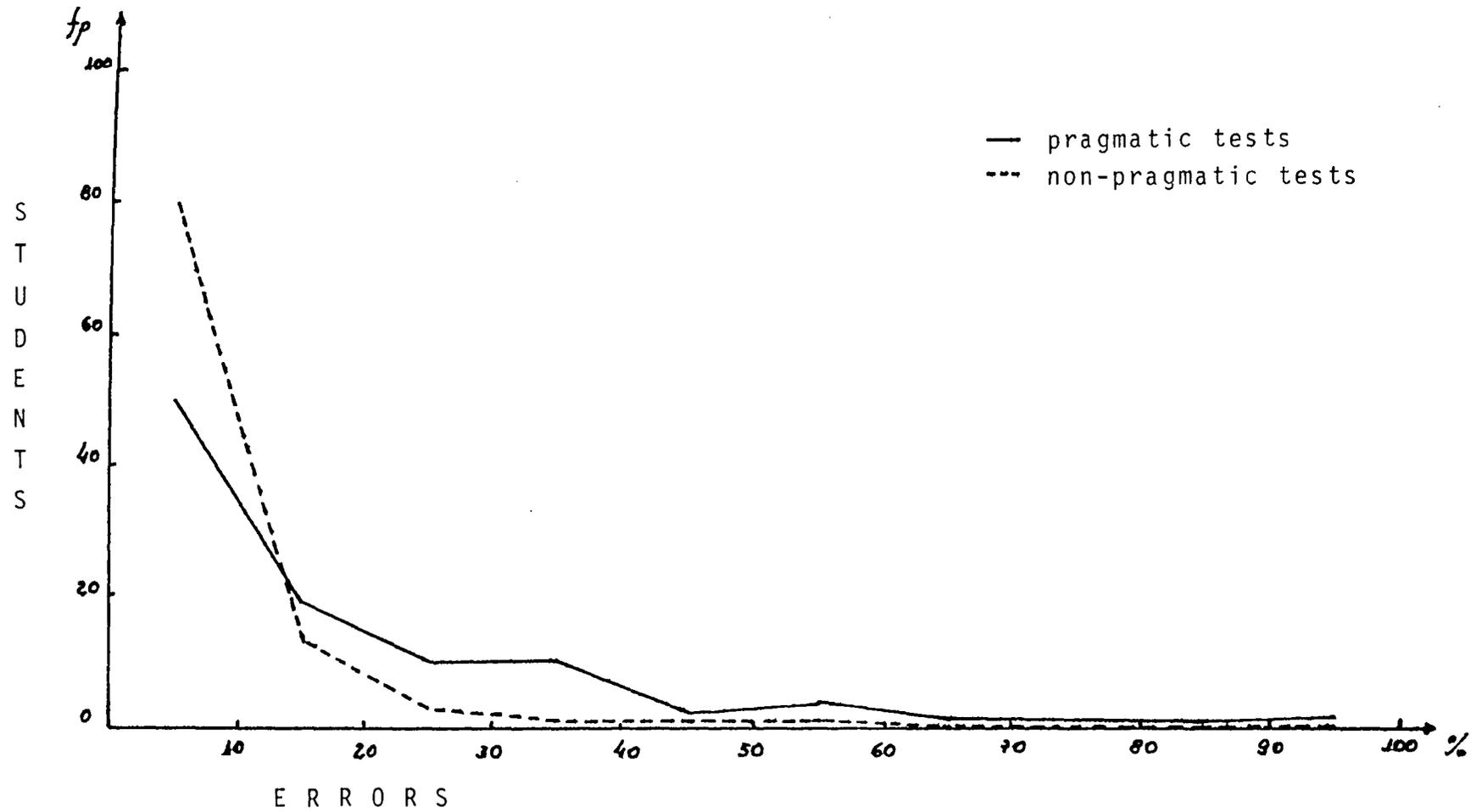
E R R O R S

Graph illustrating the frequency of errors in pragmatic and
non-pragmatic tests.

senting pragmatic tests is consistently   above   the

broken line, which indicates the higher frequency   of

errors in tests involving communication and meaning.

On account of this difference in frequency re-

garding these simplification errors within   individual

learners we are approaching the literature   on   Error

Analysis from the point of view of the second language

evaluator who seeks to define the nature   of   second

language competence taking into account sociolinguis-

tic variables.

1.3. OBJECTIVES

- to determine the causes of certain simplifi-
cation behaviour in L2 learners.

- to relate this behaviour to the   concepts   of
Competence, Performance, Interlanguage, and   evaluate
theoretical models of foreign language behaviour   ac-
cordingly.

2. REVISION OF LITERATURE

Our aim in revising the literature is to search for definitions, explanations and linguists' points of view and attitudes in relation to foreign learners' errors.

We begin by studying concepts such as competence and performance, bearing in mind the need to elucidate the extent to which competence includes sociolinguistic variables. From competence and performance we try to analyse the concept of interlanguage and the second language learning processes and strategies it embodies. We attempt to give some linguists' definitions of errors and their implications, leading to the study of two fields in Applied Linguistics: Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis, where we search for answers to our problem.

2.1. Psycholinguistic Aspects of Foreign Language Learning

2.1.1. Competence and Performance

CHOMSKY[1] defines competence as an inbuilt code or set of rules which is used by a speaker-hearer when he uses his language. It is what the speaker of a language knows implicitly, a system of rules that relate signals to semantic interpretation of these signals. He gives the following explanation of competence and performance to elucidate what his linguistic theory comprises:

> *Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely hemogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammaticality irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance.*[2]

As one notices, Chomsky's concern in his linguistic theory is with an *ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous society;* nevertheless, other linguists' studies suggest the non-existence of totally homogeneous speech communities or ideal speaker-lis-

teners - who have individually different language learning histories.

HYMES[3] explains that competence in a Chomskyan sense means *knowledge that is commonly not conscious or available for spontaneous report, but necessarily implicit in what the (ideal) speaker-listener can say* and that Chomsky's objective in describing a linguistic theory would be:

> *...to provide for an explicit account of such knowledge, especially in relation to the innate structure on which it must depend. It is in terms of such knowledge that one can produce and understand an infinite set of sentences, and that can be spoken of as 'creative' as* energeia. *Linguistic performance is most explicitly understood as concerned with the processes often termed encoding and decoding.*[4]

Competence according to Chomsky is then what a speaker knows implicitly, - it is what underlies and allows the production and recognition of sentences. What he actually produces is called performance. The performance of a native speaker of a certain language is not always grammatical, meaningful and appropriate. He may have the competence, the internalized knowledge to produce correct sentences - correct in this case meaning grammatical and meaningful - but his production (performance) may be ungrammatical or meaningless owing to stress, fatigue, illness, emotions and psy-

chological factors which affect his verbal or written behaviour. Hymes criticizes this view of competence and performance which gives the idea that competence is always related to perfection and performance to imperfection.

PIT CORDER[5] explains that the competence of a native speaker of a certain language could be characterized as a set of rules which would enable the production and understanding of sentences, that is, he would be able to recognize and produce meaningful sentences which are grammatically well formed and appropriate to the context. His sentences should be linguistically and situationally appropriate to the context in which they are inserted. Competence could thus be divided into (i) grammatical competence, which accounts for an internalized system producing and recognizing sentences which are grammatically well formed and meaningful and (ii) communicative competence where the factor of appropriateness - the language is appropriate to the context in which it is inserted - is included. Pit Corder explains that competence in a Chomskyan sense is the competence of an ideal speaker-hearer in a homogeneous society (mentioned previously): it is an abstraction. In a realistic context speakers of a language have different competences as there are individual differences. In foreign language learning

if the goal is to achieve native speaker competence we are referring to an idealized competence - that is, an idealized system which enables the production and recognition of meaningful, grammatical and appropriate sentences.

When talking about the competence of an adult native speaker it is possible to say his competence is final. A child acquiring his mother tongue has a transitional competence, which is constantly changing because of testing of hypotheses. A child learning his first language does not just repeat words and phrases he hears from adults, he creates language constantly correcting irregularities. The child is always creating rules of construction. An adult learning foreign languages will have his native language competence changed as well, in the sense that the new foreign language influences his native competence, and so when we say that the competence of an adult native speaker is final it does not mean that his competence cannot undergo slight modifications and influences.

Chomsky's concern was with an ideal speaker-listener in an also ideal homogeneous speech community, whose knowledge of the language was perfect (competence), and who was unaffected by errors of performance. In this sense his concept of competence and performance can be considered utopic, and has been widely

criticized at this account as we shall see later   on.
However, one cannot deny the contribution of Chomsky's
concepts of competence and performance to Linguistics.
Before him, language acquisition was believed to be a
matter of formation whereas Chomsky emphasized   the
creative aspects of language learning, providing   new
insights into the various fields of Linguistics.

We could say that Chomsky's concepts of compet-
ence and performance were the starting point for their
improvement and completion by other linguists,   who
broadened his concept for competence by including re-
search from fields such as Psycholinguistics,   Socio-
linguistics, Sociosemantics etc... as illustrated   in
the diagram below, given by MUNBY[6].
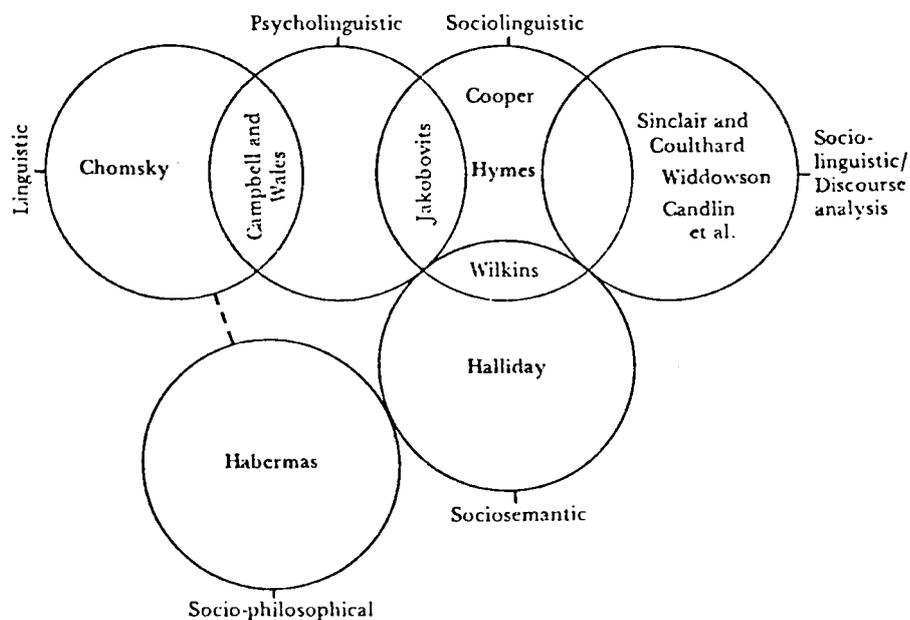
The competence constellation.

MUNBY[7] explains that although Chomsky's concepts of competence and performance have revitalized theoretical linguistics, they do not include the sociolinguistic dimension, which is essential to a study concerned with the communicative aspects of the language. Chomsky's view of competence avoids the constraints of the real world, as does Habermas' view. Habermas is also concerned with an ideal speech situation and his view of communicative competence is decontextualized because he restricts it to the ideal-speaker's mastery of constitutive universals ignoring actual speech situations. Munby continues by saying that Halliday rejects the destinction between competence and performance and is concerned with the use and functions of language and with intersentential cohesion, even though restricting his analysis of language use to the clause level. The interactional aspect of his notion of meaning potential has important pedagogical significance as does his sociosemantic basis of linguistic knowledge. Sinclair and Coulthard, Widdowson, Candlin, Leather and Bruton suggest discourse to be a central factor in competency for use. Campbell and Wales are concerned with the study of language acquisition, consequently the environmental factors consisting of psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic features are considered from the point of view

of language acquisition to the study of which communi-

cative competence is central.

So far we have given Munby's explanations for

his diagram to illustrate how Chomsky's concept of

competence, which started from theoretical linguistics

has been extended to other fields as well. However, we

have not yet studied Hymes' proposition because, since

he includes the sociosemantic aspects of communication

in the concept of competence, we shall be studying his

notions in more detail.

Hymes begins by saying that

> ...to cope with the realities of children as
> communicating beings requires a theory within
> which sociocultural factors have an explicit
> and constitutive role...[8]

and he criticizes Chomsky's view of competence and

performance:

> Such a theory of competence posits ideal
> objects in abstraction from sociocultural
> features that might enter into their descrip-
> tion. Acquisition of competence is also seen
> as essentially independent of sociocultural
> features, requiring only suitable speech in
> the environment of the child to develop. The
> theory of performance is the one sector that
> might have a specific sociocultural content;
> but while equated with a theory of language
> use, it is essentially concerned with psy-
> chological by-products of the analysis of
> grammar, not, say, with social interaction
> ...[9]

He explains that the social interaction is essential

because there are differential competences within het-

erogeneous speech communities:

> *The combination of community diversity and differential competence makes it necessary not to take the presence in a community of widespread language, say, Spanish or English, at face value. Just as one puts the gloss of a native word in quotation marks, so as to imply that the meaning of the word is thereby accurately identified, so one should put the name of a language in quotation marks, until its true status in terms of competence has been determined. (Clearly there is need for a theoretically motivated and empirically tested set of terms by which to characterize the different kinds of competence that may be found). In an extreme case what counts as 'English' in the code repertoire of a community may be but a few phonologically marked forms (the Iwam of new Guinea). The cases in general constitute a continuum, perhaps a scale, from more re-stricted to less restricted varieties, some-what crosscut by adaptation of the same inherited 'English' materials to different purpose and needs. A linguist analysing data from a community on the assumption 'once English, always English' might miss and sadly misinterpret the actual competence supposed-ly expressed by his grammar.* [10]

Hymes refers to studies which suggest that there should be two models of competence, one for understanding and one for production; others suggest a dual competence for reception and a single competence for production as the capacity for Negro children to interpret the standard and the substandard phonol-ological systems but to produce only the substandard. Hymes illustrates a case in which there is dual com--etence for production: a peasant might have the com-

mand of the verbal abilities stressed and valued in the culture but cannot display it in front of a super-ior: because the appropriate behaviour in this case is to have clumsy words and sentences, loud voices and wild gestures...

In the latter case linguistic competence co-varies with interlocutor. These mentioned competence variables lead to the need of a social approach even to describe a single homogeneous code:

> ...*much of the difficulty in determining what is acceptable and intuitively correct in grammatical description arises because social and contextual determinants are not controlled. By making explicit the reference of a description to a single use in a single context, and by testing discrepancies and variations against differences of use and context, the very goal of not dealing with diversity can be achieved - in the limited, and only possible, sense in which, it can be achieved... If analysis is not to be reduced to explication of a corpus, or debauch into subjectivity, then the responces of members of the community whose language is analysed must be utilized - and not merely informally or ad hoc, but in some explicit systematic way. In particular, since every response is made in some context, control of the depend-ence of judgements and abilities on context must be gained...*

Hymes explains that when a child acquires knowl-edge of sentences he not only acquires their grammati-cal competence but also the competence of *when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner.*[12] He acquires com-

petence for appropriateness: he becomes able to *accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others.*[13] The competence for appropriateness is thus concerned with the features and uses of language and intrinsically related with the motivations, attitudes and values towards this language. He states that a model of language must be designed *with a face toward communicative conduct and social life.*[14] And he continues:

> *...There are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless. Just as rules of syntax can control aspects of syntax, so rules of speech acts enter as a controling factor for linguistic form as a whole... Competency for use is part of the same developmental matrix as competence for grammar.*[15]

On account of the competence for use, the concepts of competence and performance should be deeply analysed, says Hymes, because according to Chomsky the theory of language use is equivalent to the theory of performance, therefore he suggests transcending the *dichotomy of competence:performance.* Hymes says that:

> *There are several sectors of communicative competence, of which the grammatical is one ... there is behaviour and, underlying it, there are several systems of rules reflected in the judgements and abilities of those whose messages the behaviour manifests... (in relation to Chomsky's notion of competence*

> *and performance)... the linguistic theory under discussion, judgements are said to be of two kinds: of <u>grammaticality</u>, with respect to competence, and of <u>acceptability</u>, with respect to performance. Each pair of terms is strictly matched... the analysis just given requires that explicit distinctions be made within the notion of 'acceptability' to match the distinctions of kinds of 'performance', and at the same time, the entire set of terms must be examined and recast with respect to the communicative as a whole.*[16]

And he goes on to explain that he takes competence as the most general term for the capabilities of a person; competence being dependent upon both tacit knowledge and ability for use and the concept of performance

> *...will take on great importance, insofar as the study of communicative competence is seen as an aspect of what may be called the ethnography of symbolic forms – the study of a variety of genres, narration, dance, song, instrumental music, visual art, that interrelate with speech in the communicative life of a society, and in terms of which the relative importance and meaning of speech and language must be accessed...*[17]

Hymes suggests that if the theory of communication and culture is to be integrated with linguistic theory a fourfold distinction arises leading to four questions (i) whether and to what degree something is formally possible: something possible *within a formal system is grammatical, cultural, or, on occasion, communicative*. And the opposite can be said to be *uncultural or uncommunicative, as well as ungrammatical.*

(ii) whether and to what degree something is feasible:
this question embraces one portion of the headings of
the performance and acceptability, and concerns those
psychological factors such as *memory limitation, per-
ceptual device, effects of properties such as nesting,
embedding, branching, and the like*. Hymes suggests that
the implementation constraints which effect   grammar
may largely be those affecting the culture as a whole
and that there would be substantial identitify where
the brain is concerned. (iii) whether and to what de-
gree something is appropriate: this question embraces
the other portion of what is understood by performance
plus acceptability. Where communication is concerned,
appropriateness is the intersection between linguistic
and cultural appropriateness. This question comprises
the judgement of sentences in relation to situations.
(iv) whether and to what degree something is done: this
fourth question includes structural change, on account
of the fact that language users capabilities conscious-
ly or unconsciously include some *knowledge of probabi-
lities and shifts in them as indicators of style, re-
sponse etc...*; where something may be possible, feas-
ible, and appropriate and not occur.

And Hymes summarises:

> *...the goal of a broad theory of competence
> can be said to be to show the ways in which*

*the systematically possible, the feasible and
the appropriate are linked to produce and
interpret actually occurring cultural behav-
iour.*[18]

Hymes' view of competence and performance en-
ables us to have insights in relation to our problem:
the traditional Chomskyan distinction of competence
and performance does not provide us with explanations
of our performance variables among individual learners,
whereas Hymes' concepts suggest to us the need for
including the sociolinguistic dimension.

So far we have analysed the concepts of compet-
ence and performance in relation to native speakers of
any language. Let us now narrow the field of our
research to second language learning.

2.1.2. APPROXIMATIVE SYSTEMS AND INTERLANGUAGE

There are authors who believe that a second
language is learned the same way the first language was
acquired; they are followers of the L2 Acquisition =
L1 Acquisition Hypothesis where, when a child hears
speech in the second language he organizes this speech
actively and will make generalizations about this se-

cond language in the same way he did when learning his mother tongue. Therefore in his performance this learner would produce deviant utterances of the same type he had formaly produced when acquiring his first language. VIVIAN COOK[19], on revising the literature relevant to this hypothesis says that: ...*first language acquisition and second language* learning are similar processes, but differ in specific content and order of acquisition,...*

Following this idea it could be said that the native child acquiring his first language has transitional competence and a child or an adult learning their second language also have transitional competence in the foreign language.

The processes underlying transitional competence of first language acquisition and second language

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*
Traditionally second and foreign language learning are defined as follows:

Foreign language learning occurs when *the target language is not the mother-tongue of any group within the country where it is being learned and has no internal communication function either. The aim of teaching the language is to increase ease of contact with foreign language speakers outside the country.*

Second language learning occurs when the language being learned (L2) is not the mother tongue (L1) of any group within the country but it does have some internal, social function. The countries where L2 is the second language are multilingual stated and no local language is sufficiently dominant to be the national language. It is the case of southern India, for instance. (WILKINS, D.A. Linguistic in Language Teaching. London, Arnold, 1972. p.150-3).

For the purpose of our dissertation we shall use these terms interchangeably.

learning are similar but differ in order of acquisition and specific content.

In the same vein, W. NEMSER[20] says that when a learner attempts to utilize the target language he employs an approximative system, which is a system linguistically deviant from the target language itself and variable according to proficiency level. This variation is also due to learning experience, communication function, and personal learning characteristics. He goes on to say that a learner's speech is at a given time the patterned product of a linguistic system, an approximative system, which is distinct both from the mother tongue and the target language and internally structured; a learner's approximative system has successive stages of learning, forming an evolving series the earliest occurring when the learner first attempts to use the target language, the most advanced at the closest approach of the approximative system to the target language; and in a given contact situation, Nemser says that the approximative systems of the learners at the same stage of proficiency roughly coincide and these differences are in their great majority on account of differences in learning experience.

> The speech of a learner...is structurally
> organized, manifesting the order and cohes-
> iveness of a system, although one frequently
> changing with atypical rapidity and subject
> to radical reorganization through the mass-

> *ive intrusion of new elements as learning*
> *proceeds. As such learner's speech should be*
> *studied not only by reference to source lan-*
> *guage and target language but in its own*
> *terms as well...*[21]

Using Nemser's definition of approximative sys-
tem we could then say that these elements have a very
close relation to what SELINKER[22] and RICHARD'S[23] call
Interlanguage.

According to Selinker, language learning envol-
ves three meaningful performance situations: in the
first place there are those utterances produced by the
foreign language learner in his own native language;
second, utterances produced by the learner attempting
to speak the target language and third, utterances pro-
duced by native speakers of that target language. In-
terlanguage could then be defined as a linguistic sys-
tem based on observable output (performance) which re-
sults from a learner's attempted production of the
target language norm and which will probably not be
the same as the hypothesised corresponding utterance a
native speaker would produce in the same situation.

The study of utterances produced by the learner
in the target language is called performance analysis,
which studies both the *correct* and deviant utterances;
while error analysis studies only the deviant utter-
ances of a learner's performance. More details related

to these topics will come in a later section for they are of vital importance to our present study.

We can see that the concepts of transitional competence, approximative systems and interlanguage are very often strongly related. A learner's interlanguage is said to possess, among rules and subsystems, fossilizable items or structures. These latter are linguistic phenomena which speakers of a language will tend to keep in their interlanguage relative to another language, irrespective of the learner's age or amount of instruction he has received or is receiving in the target language: the moment the learner's attention is focused on new and apparently difficult subject matters, or when he appears to be in a state of anxiety or when he has not spoken the target language for a relatively long time, we are faced with the phenomenon of *backsliding*. SELINKER[24] explains that this phenomenon is not a regression to mother tongue norms but a regression towards fossilized interlanguage norms, which reappear or re-emerge in the learner's interlanguage productive performance in the form of linguistic structures which were thought to have been erradicated.

In order to explain fossilization and interlanguage Selinker has postulated five language learning processes:

2.1.3. LANGUAGE LEARNING PROCESSES

SELINKER[25] suggests five psycholinguistic processes which contribute to the formation of rules, subsystems and fossilizable items or structures in a learner's interlanguage. Language transfer is the process that has occured when in the learner's interlanguage performance we can identify rules, subsystems and fossilizable items resulting from the target language (e.g. *John has eight years old); transfer of training is identifiable as a process when fossilizable items, rules and subsystems result from training procedures (e.g. the learner does not make the distinction between he and she even though this distinction is present in his mother tongue. The explanation for this is that many coursebooks present drills only with he ignoring almost completely she. Learners feel they do not need to make the distinction in order to communicate). Strategies of second language learning were used when fossilizable items, rules and subsystems were a result of an identifiable approach (by the learner) to the material to be learned (this strategy involves simplification - learners adopt the principle that all verbs are transitive or intransitive and produce sentences like *Don't worry, he's hearing her). Strategies of second language communication can be seen

to have been used when rules, subsystems and fossiliz-
able items are a result of an identifiable approach by
the learner to communication with native speakers   of
the target language (e.g. *I was in France when I   see
my uncle. - past experience of the learner has   shown
him that if he thinks about grammatical processes while
attempting to express in English meanings he   already
has, his speech is hesitant and disconnected,   leading
native speakers to be impatient with him).   In   this
respect we could add that this strategy of second lan-
guage communication also occurs in a classroom   situ-
ation where the learner fears his teacher will be   im-
patient with him. Overgeneralization of the target lan-
guage linguistic materials was used when fossilizable items,
subsystems and rules of the interlanguage   performance
result from a clear overgeneralization of   the   target
language rules and semantic features (e.g. *Why did he
mended it?). It is important to point out that   it   is
not always possible to identify which processes are to
be attributed to the observable data.

Each of these processes or combinations of them
force fossilizable material upon the surface of inter-
language utterances, controling to a very large extent
the surface structure of these utterances.   Selinker
points out that combinations of these processes   may
produce entirely fossilized interlanguage   competence,

as for instance *pidgin English*, where the strategy of communication dictates to learners that they know enough in order to communicate - consequently learning stops.

2.1.4. PIDGINIZATION AND SIMPLIFICATION

Richards defines pidginizations as:

> ...*an interlanguage arising as a medium of communication between speakers of different languages, characterized by grammatical structure and lexical content originating in different sources, unintelligibility to speakers of the source language and by stability...*[26]

Creolization has undergone the same process but it is spoken as a mother tongue, as in for instance the language spoken in the Bahamas, Jamaica, Barbados etc...

Here are some examples of Pidgins and Creoles:

> *To grow up decent our children need new clothing to present themself in school proper neat!! The sun have to shine for our childrens too. Amen.*[27]

The example above is a sample of a grammatically almost *perfect* written Black English, given by Dillard. Examples of oral Black English:

He don't be waitin' for me right now.[28]

Sometime Daddy be drivin', he call people names.[29]

Example of the English spoken by Puerto Ricans in their American community:

No make any difference, but I like when I go because I don't have too many time for buy and the little time we buy have to go to someplace and I find everything there.[30]

Maori English:

She went down to her nany's and see if her mother was there.[31]

Aboriginal English:

We bin give you a lot of shell, eh?[32]

Jamaica Creole, where the status of the addressee influences the type of language:

(the bus conductor to the rich tourist) *Please, step up, sir.*

(the same bus conductor to a group of poor Jamaicans) *Me tell unu say step up.*[33]

It is important to point out that for the purposes of this dissertation we are not engaged in the study of local varieties of nonstandard English, such

as immigrant English and the indigenous variety of English. We are concerned with the *phenomenon* of pidginization.

Selinker said that the strategy of communication produces fossilized competence owing to the fact that the objetive - *communication* - has been achieved, therefore there is no more need to improve *language learning*. Thus these two strategies, of learning and communication, are related to the phenomenon of language contact and influenced by the circumstances in which learning occurred plus the specific uses of English that were required. Richards explains that:

> ...*the learner generates a grammar in which many of the marked-unmarked distinctions of the target language are removed, where inflected forms tend to be replaced by uninflected forms, and where preposition, auxiliary and article usage tend to be simplified...*[34]

In our research we are mainly concerned with the tendency of inflected forms to be replaced by uninflected forms and the simplification of auxiliary usage - related to auxiliary inversion in questions.

Simplification can be said to occur when the language that is being learned is made easier to use and to learn. Simplified language is two-fold, in the sense that it can be used both by the person addressed and by the addressee - that is, the addresser will be

using simplified language himself when he thinks he will be best understood by the addressee. Baby talk is an example of simplification in the mother-tongue, as also is foreigner talk, used sometimes by native speakers of that language in order to make communication easier or even to make fun of foreigners' speech. Pidginization will occur when this simplified foreigner talk is sufficient for communication purposes. Learning stops, and this fossibilized language characterizing the learner's interlanguage could be considered instead of a transitional competence, a final competence[35]: final not in the sense that the idealized final native speaker competence has been achieved (as desired when English is being learned as a foreign language in a formal situation) but final competence as in the case of pidgin English as it is spoken by immigrant communities or indigenous pidgins, and also some learners of English as a foreign language to whom the only goal is a certain degree of limited communication. Richards says that in a second language setting *the generation of an interlanguage may become institutionalized at the group level, through socio-cultural adaptation of English to the local setting*[36] whereas in a foreign setting where standard English is studied formally, the learner's interlanguage performance may be regarded as transitional or even undesirable.

The study of a learner's interlanguage perform-
ance may follow different and distinct directions, and
it is not a simple task. Corder says that:

> ...To discover something about the processes
> of second language learning we need to be
> able to make longitudinal studies of lan-
> guage learners, correlating their linguistic
> development with the data which is put before
> them. This means making successive descrip-
> tions of their interlanguage...[37]

As mentioned in an earlier section, the study
of a learner's interlanguage performance is called
performance analysis where the study of the learner's
errors would be the natural starting point but in which
the final analysis would include the learner's lin-
guistic performance as a whole, not only counting er-
rors but measuring the learner's success as well, as
ENKVIST[38] suggest. Error Analysis studies the errors
found in the learner's interlanguage performance. COR-
DER[39] names a learner's interlanguage performance idio-
syncratic dialect (he mentions four different classes
of idiosyncratic dialects, the language used by the
second language learner being one of them) and explains
that Error Analysis is not only concerned with second
language learner's idiosyncratic dialects, although
this is the field relevant to our present research -
our attention being focused on second language
learner's interlanguage or idiosyncratic dialect, which

Corder defines as:

> ...*regular, systematic, meaningful, i.e. it*
> *has a grammar, and is in principle describ-*
> *able in terms of a set of rules, some subset*
> *of which is a subset of the rules of the*
> *target socio dialect. His dialect is unstable*
> *... and is not, so far as we know, a 'langue'*
> *in that its conventions are not shared by a*
> *social group... and lastly, many of its sen-*
> *tences present problems of interpretation to*
> *any native speaker of the target dialect...*[40]

Since errors of various types can be said to be
the cause for problems of interpretation in many sen-
tences of a learner's idiosyncratic dialect, it is now
necessary to make clear what is understood by *error*.

2.2. ANALYSIS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE ERRORS

2.2.1. ERROR

PIT CORDER[41] says that a learner's sentences
can be considered erroneous only in comparison with
the grammar of his mother tongue or the grammar of the
target language, because in terms of his transitional
or idiosyncratic dialect they are presumably well-
formed. The native speaker or non-native bilingual may

produce ill-formed sentences not because they do not
have the underlying knowledge for their well-formed
production, but because of non-linguistic factors such
as indecision, stress, fatigue, emotional state etc...
These ill-formed sentences are considered *lapses* or
mistakes and may appear in the form of:

> ...*transpositions or substitutions or ad-*
> *ditions of a speech sound ou morpheme, word*
> *or complete phrase, or some sort of blend of*
> *these. Some... appear to be false starts or*
> *restructuring of what the speaker wants to*
> *say...*[42]

and in addition to this these sentences are ill-formed
in the speaker's performance. *Errors* on the other hand,
are found in the foreign language learner's interlan-
guage performance and are said to reflect his compet-
ence in the target language. This underlying knowledge
may differ in many crucial points from the target lan-
guage and very probably includes many characteristics
of the learner's mother tongue. Summarizing, errors
could be defined as *breaches against linguistic struc-*
ture proper, against langue or competence and mistakes
as casual slips, *breaches of normal pattern of parole*
or performance.

However, this distinction between errors and
mistakes is not enough, according to some authors such
as ENKVIST[43] and DUŠKOVÁ[44]. Enkvist says that in many

contexts this error-mistake distinction works well, but

> ...in a contextualized view of language... it raises all the classic problems of the dualistic principle: is for instance style (in the sense of contextual appropriateness) a feature of langue or of parole, of competence or of performance?...[45]

He suggests that errors should be graded according to the degree in which each error interferes or not with communication in a specific situation and context. He explains that:

> One difficulty is that in a goal related universe, no errors are errors in themselves. They are only errors in relation to specific objectives. In relation to one objective, a certain structure may be an error; in relation to another objective the same structure may be acceptable, providing that it does not interfere with communication...[46]

Enkvist suggests that this view of goal-related errors (the principle of the functional relativity of errors) does not have a one to one relationship with the error-mistake distinction:

> ...the error-mistake theory builds on a single, absolute standard, whereas the view of goal related errors assumes that there may be as many norms, standards and measures as there are goals and situations.[47]

2.2.2. Types of Error

Following Enkvist's view of goal related errors we could include BURT's[48] classification of *global* and *local* errors. Global errors are those in which communication is significantly hindered - the message may be misinterpreted because those errors affect the overall organization of the sentence. In the category of global errors she includes *wrong word order* (e.g., *English language use much people = Many people use the English language); *missing, wrong or misplaced sentence connectors* (e.g., *He will be rich until he marry = He will be rich when he marries); *missing cues to signal obligatory exceptions to pervasive syntactic rules* (e.g. *The students proposal looked into the principal = The student's proposal was looked into by the principal); and *overgeneralising pervasive syntactic rules to exception*, meaning the non-observation of selectional restrictions on certain lexical items (e. g., *We amused that movie very much = That movie amused us very much). Local errors on the other hand do not usually cause significant misinterpretation for they are limited to a single part of the sentence; they are errors of *verb* and noun *inflections*, articles, *auxiliaries* and the formation of quantifiers.

Our concern in this research is with *local* er-

rors.

Pit Corder also classifies errors according to the degree to which communication is affected, but none of his categories corresponds to Burt's global errors, because these latter affect communication in the sense that misinterpretation of the message may occur whereas the former are more concerned with appropriacy.

PIT CORDER[49] refers to the following types of errors: *Referencial errors* occur when a speaker uses a term with the intention of referring to some features of the world to which it is conventionally inapplicable. Corder gives as an example the use of *hat* instead of *cap*. *Register errors* occur when, for instance in a naval context, somebody refers to a naval ship as *boat*. *Social errors* occur when a speaker selects forms which are inapropriate to his social relations such as the eight-year-old girl greeting the local Bishop *Hi! Father*. *Textual errors* occur when the speaker does not select the structurally correct form to show the intended relation between two sentences in a discourse, as for example, in answer to the question: *Who is the girl near the door? * Mary is.*

Referential and textual errors interfere most seriously in cognitive communication; social and register errors concern interpersonal relations. These four types of errors in communication may be commited

both by natives and non-natives.

In relation to language learners, Selinker's
five processes for language learning could be the
basis to explain the root of various types of errors
such as those listed above (global, local, referential,
register, textual, social) and others. Let us now pro-
ceed to other types of error.

2.2.3. MOTHER TONGUE INTERFERENCE

The first of SELINKER's[50] processes, transfer
of training, explains interlanguage errors due to mo-
ther-tongue interference. Interference could be de-
scribed as the formation and testing of hypotheses on
the basis of the native language. These errors could
be used as evidence of the linguistic organization of
the learner's native language - foreign accent being
an example of its phonological system.

VIVIAN COOK[51] points out the difference between
acquiring language and learning a language. The native
child acquiring his first language acquires it infor-
mally - he picks it up *without specifically being taught
it*. He has to find out what language is itself - its
symbolic representation, phonological and grammatical

structure etc... Foreign language learners, on the
other hand, in their great majority are *taught*. They
find themselves in a formal situation. The second lan-
guage learner *already knows the potential of language
and can go straight on to discovering how that poten-
tial is realized in the second language*. The second
language learner is placed in an ambiguous position:
knowing what language is constitutes an advantage on
the one hand, but on the other hand it is a disadvan-
tage because be *may not be aware which parts of his
knowledge are about 'language' and which are about 'a
language'*. Languages can thus be assumed to be all the
same in general terms and specific terms as well. And
when languages are assumed to be all the same in spe-
cific terms we are facing the problem of interference.

Corder explains that learning a second language
is a question of increasing one's linguistic behavioral
repertoire, or *learning a set of alternatives for some
subset of the rules they already know..some of the rules
they already know are also used in the production and
understanding of the second language*. He continues:

> ...*learners transfer what they already know
> about performing one task to performing an-
> other and similar task. But the learner does
> not know what the nature of the task is, un-
> til he has learned in what way the two tasks
> are different he will perform the second task
> in the only way he knows, that is, as if it
> were the same as the first task. He will con-*

> *tinue to apply old rules where new ones are*
> *needed. And he will make mistakes of course.*
> *Making errors in the second language can, in*
> *part, be explained by the notion of transfer.*
> *It is sometimes called negative transfer or*
> *interference. When the nature of the two*
> *tasks happen to be the same... is called*
> *positive transfer or facilitation. It is just*
> *as well that language do, in fact, have*
> *strong resemblances to each other...*[52]

Positive transfer or facilitation has strong connections to what is general to all languages - language universals. It is the specific side of each language that leads to negative transfer or interference. Some errors of interference, syntactic and/or lexical, may gradually diminish as the learner starts mastering the rules of the target language, that is, as his approximative systems or interlanguage approaches the desired model of the target language. Other errors of interference, such as those of pronunciation, are more difficult to be erradicated because they involve motor perceptual skills, which are related to processes of recognition and articulatory execution. *Articulatory processes do seem to be programmed in more or less fixed routines, - once learned they become firmly established and resistent to modification and extension ..., the same happens to recognition processes which depend upon teaching incoming sense data with some already stored perceptual schema...*[53]

It is in the need for explaining the differences between mother tongue and target language - in-

terference - that the basis for contrastive analysis (studied in detail in a later section) lies. However, the study of learners' interlanguage performance and studies of the acquisition of second language have brought light to other sources of error besides mother tongue interference.

2.2.4. INTRALINGUAL INTERFERENCE

Errors caused by intralingual interference can be said to be intrinsically related to four of the five processes suggested by Selinker (language transfer, transfer of training, strategies of second language learning, strategies of second language communication, and overgeneralization of target language linguistic materials). The first of these five processes, language transfer, underlies the formation of fossilizable items on account of mother-tongue interference. The strategies of learning and communication underlie fossilizable items or structures such as those found in pidgin-English speaker's interlanguage and the other two processes, transfer of training and overgeneralization of the target language linguistic materials, underlie fossilization due to intralingual interfer-

ence.

The term intralingual interference - hence in-
tralingual errors - has been suggested by JACK RI-
CHARDS[54] who says that these errors refer to items
produced by the learner which reflect not the struc-
ture of the mother tongue but generalizations based on
partial exposure to the target language. Similarly to
what happens to first language learners, the second
language learner tries to derive the rules behind the
data to which he has been exposed developing hypoth-
eses that may correspond neither to the mother tongue
nor the target language. Richards says that for
example, once the basic rules such as those concerning
subject-object relationship, predication, negation etc
... are required, a considerable amount of difficulty
in second language learning is related to selection
restrictions and to surface structures and contextual
rules of the language. Intralingual errors are:

> ...*representative of the sort of errors we*
> *might expect from anyone learning English as*
> *a second language. They are typical of sys-*
> *tematic errors of English usage which are*
> *found in numerous case studies of the Eng-*
> *lish errors of speakers of particular mother*
> *tongues. They are the sort of mistakes which*
> *persist from week to week and which recur*
> *from one year to the next with any group of*
> *learners. They cannot be described as mere*
> *failure to memorize a segment of language,*
> *or as occasional lapses in performance due*
> *to memory limitations, fatigue and the like.*
> *In some learners they represent final gram-*
> *matical competence; in others they may be*

indication of transitional competence...[55]

As we have seen so far interference may occur between mother-tongue and target language and within the target language itself. In order to prevent, by means of prediction, mother-tongue interference errors, studies on contrastive analysis arose.

2.2.5. CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS AND ERROR ANALYSIS

ROBERT LADO's[56] Linquistics Across Cultures is considered the initiator of Contrastive Analysis because it brought together a large amount of evidence in the field of interference. Lado postulated that those elements that were similar to the learner's native language would be simple for him and those areas that were different would be difficult for him to learn, and errors of performance could be expected. Teaching would not be necessary where the structures of the two languages (native and target) were similar but should concentrate on where they differed; otherwise simple exposure would be enough. Teaching itself would be different according to the various mother-tongues, consequently a comparative study of the

mother-tongue and target language would enable the prediction of learner's areas of difficulty, and thus the decision of the linguistic materials to be given in a teaching context.

Lado's argument was the starting point to a new linguistic field - that of contrastive studies, which, on its own, led to various directions according to their goals and studying procedures. WARDHAUGH[57] makes the distinction between the strong and weak claims of Contrastive Analysis. The strong claim is prognostic and implies that ...*the difficulties may be predicted from as comparison of equivalent description of the two languages before the actual learning situation is observed*...; the weak claim is said to be diagnostic because it is an attempt to explain deviations which have already been found.

Various authors are against the predictive side of contrastive analysis, Dušková among them, in the sense that some predicted errors, errors that should have occurred, in fact did not, while errors did occur in certain non expected areas. WILKINS[58] suggests that this failure in the predictive side of contrastive analysis is due to the methodology employed in these studies. The comparison between source language and target language was based on translation equivalents of the two languages, and he says that if comparisons took into

account the entire systems of the two languages it
would be difficult for one to say that the two lan-
guages were the same at some point. He says that:

> it is not always true that differences be-
> tween native and target language lead to er-
> ror through transfer. Nor it is true that the
> native language is the sole source of error.
> It is therefore an oversimplification to say
> that differences cause error, while similar-
> ities do not. Unfortunately exact predictions
> of the language learner's behaviour are very
> difficult, since there is no way of being
> sure how he will respond to these varying
> factors. By prediction here is meant predic-
> tion from comparison of the structures of
> the language, without reference to evidence
> of the actual language behaviour of learners.
> Such prediction is also made difficult by
> the fact that, although a comparison may re-
> veal learning difficulties, it cannot deter-
> mine how the learner will use his mother
> tongue to resolve the difficulty. Lado points
> out that a French learner of English, faced
> with two new sounds, / ð / and / θ /, will sub-
> stitute either /d/ and /t/ or /s/ and / z/.
> Which substitutions an individual will choose
> cannot be known until his learning behaviour
> is observed. In this case a purely predict-
> ive analysis will not provide the teacher
> with all the information he needs for a teach-
> ing strategy. [59]

With regard to comparisons between two languages
SCIARONE[60] suggests the first step to be the descrip-
tion of the formal-semantic system of a language, then
the comparison with the other language would occur by
means of the semantic aspect because *the semantic as-
pect is reducible to the world observable by the senses
which is similar for all people,* and in the way in

which it was formerly expressed in the mother tongue. He says that *this method of comparison implies that it is not necessary to lay bare in advance the entire structure of both the language that is to be learnt and the native language, for the two structures as such cannot be compared.*

Sciarone suggests that once one knows which language is to be learned, its structure should be described and immediately compared with the native language. An exhaustive description of the two languages and then the comparison would produce too much superfluous work. Besides, following the methodology suggested above, he claims that all similarities and all differences would automatically emerge, and one could see that many phenomena partly correspond and partly differ. He is suggesting a comparison between the target language surface structure and the native language deep structure.

Robert Lado had said that those elements which were similar between native and second language would be easy to learn and those that were different would cause difficulty. It is very possible that course-book writers and language teachers interpreted different as difficult to explain and similar as something easy to explain to their students. STOCKWELL et al.[61] suggest that what is difficult to explain may be easy for the

learner to internalize, whereas what is easy to explain may (or may not) be difficult for him to internalize. It is important to bear in mind that learning occurs according to what the learner was able to internalize (intake) and not by means of what was taught (input).

Following Lado's suggestion that teaching should concentrate on the different parts and that where the two languages were similar exposure to the target language was enough, some coursebook writers and teachers concentrated on teaching the contrasting details, leaving the *similar* part as if it were part of the native language. Wilga Rivers explains that:

> ...*as soon as a foreign-language structure
> is taught as though some elements within it
> function as in the native-language system
> and some function contrastively, it is not
> being viewed as a part of the total func-
> tioning system of the foreign language, and
> the student begins to learn the language
> piecemeal. A student taught in this fashion
> has great difficulty learning to move freely
> within the new language system.*[62]

and when this type of teaching occurs there is not only danger of mother tongue interference at some points but also confusion and hesitation concerning *the limits of acceptable extrapolation from the native language.*

According to the predictions of contrastive

studies, certain sounds would promote a greater degree of difficulty because they did not occur in the native language, and the teaching of sounds should concentrate on the these. RIVERS[63] explains that this procedure results in the so-called foreign accent because little attention is given to those sounds with fewer contrastive features, consequently there is a disruption of the phonological system of the foreign language where the sounds produced with incorrect articulatory positions would deform the neighbouring sounds. What should be done, on the contrary, is to enable the learner to acquire the phonological system as a functioning whole, where he would learn to discriminate and produce sounds *that signal distinctions of meaning within the new language, without being constantly reminded of ways in which it is similar to or different from the phonological system of the native language.*

Bearing in mind Lado's claim that what was different between the two languages would lead to difficulty and what was similar would enable easy learning, the contrative studies arose; but Wilga Rivers makes a clear distinction between different and contrastive. It is possible that it was the non observance of these differences or even the misinterpretation of what Lado meant by different which caused Contrastive Analysis to be criticized in so many ways. On

giving the distinction between difference and contrast

Wilga Rivers says that:

> *One language may combine elements of various functions in pre-, post-, and medial positions in one unit, whereas the other language may be analytic, arranging elements in linear fashion. In these cases the surface systems differ to such an extent that comparison of specific elements does not give sufficient information to be pedagogically helpful. For such aspects the new system will have to be taught as an integrated whole without reference to the details of operation of an alien system. For a contrast to be distinguishable at any level, there must be some correspondence at a higher level of structure. Phonemes may contrast in lexical items that are similar in the two languages, there may be contrastive morphemic patterns within syntactic structures of similar applicability ...*[64]

and where there is *contrast* the mother tongue habits of the learner would tempt him to use patterns of his own language at that point, and this being a tendency which would arise when the learner attempted to express himself in a comunicative situation. To avoid this, intensive practice alone would not be the solution. The learner would need to be alerted to that specific interference problem *so that he may practice with awareness and concentration and monitor his own production with watchfulness until he finds himself producing the target language forms with ease and accuracy.*

Since the emergence of Contrastive Analysis, it

has been the basis for the production of second language teaching methodology. And the method of teaching by contrast allowed or reinforced errors which otherwise might not have occurred. This is the case with the premature teaching of minimal pairs and contrast between *do* and *make, come* and *go,* and so on, which, instead of clarifying the learner's mind produce confusion. GEORGE[65] explains that the origin for the confusion between *he* and *she* lies in the contrastive presentation. Confusion is avoided if items are presented at different times. This point of view is followed by Richards who is against premature contrastive presentation. *Classroom experience and common sense often suggest that a safer strategy for instruction is to minimeze opportunities for confusion by selecting non-synonymous contexts for related words, by treating them at different times, and by avoiding exercises based on contrast and transformation.*[66]

The objectives of contrastive analysis, those of comparing the structures of the mother tongue and native language to *predict* learner's difficulties proved to be insufficient, and the need to study the learner's interlanguage performance and thus see which the difficulties were and why they were such, arose. It is much better to use contrastive analysis as a means for providing explanations of known errors, than

to use it to predict errors which were theoretically established, and as soon as one examines the learner's actual performance one sees that it is unwise to say that interference is the main source of errors. Wilkins says that:

> The attempt to explain learning difficulty and error by reference to interference cannot account for all the facts, and it might be better to abandon the idea of transfer altogether. It is not possible to replace the notion of transfer by an entirely satisfactory alternative, but it is possible to formulate a hypothesis which manages to reflect the different sources of systematic errors.[67]

Studies on the acquisition of a second language plus the reaction against the theoretical-predictive side of contrastive analysis gave birth to *Error Analysis*, which aims at systematically describing and explaining the errors made by second language learners in order to find a shorter way to the analysis of foreign language learners' difficulties. One could say that there has been an evolving chain in linguistics in this field, that is, contrastive analysis initially aimed at predicting theoretically which errors would occur; error analysis aimed at studying the errors which in fact occurred in the learner's performance, and this led to the broadening of the Error Analysis field in which not only the errors are analysed but the

whole of the learner's interlanguage performance –
hence *Performance Analysis*. The two fields of studies,
Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis, can be said
to be complementary rather than mutually exclusive.
Dušková adds:

> ...we shall attempt to answer the last ques-
> tion raised in this study as to whether con-
> trastive analysis of the source and the tar-
> get language can be entirely replaced by an
> error-based analysis. The present findings
> do not seem to justify such a procedure. They
> rather suggest that contrastive analysis might
> be profitably supplemented by the results of
> error-based analyses, particulary in the
> preparation of teaching materials.[68]

As we have seen contrastive analysis studies
were concerned with predicting the areas of interfer-
ence between mother-tongue and target language. The
study of errors produced in the learner's interlanguage
performance, error analysis, has led to the discovery
of other sources of errors such as those due to intra-
lingual interference.

2.2.6. ERROR ANALYSIS: SOURCES OF INTRALINGUAL INTER-
FERENCE ERRORS

The two processes, transfer of training and

overgeneralization of the target language linguistic materials, are the probable explanation for the intra-lingual errors, which JACK RICHARDS[69] classifies in four types as follow: errors due to *overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules* and *false concepts hypothesised.*

Overgeneralization is the source of errors where a deviant structure is created based on the learner's experience of other structures in the target language such as **She can walks, *They are hope, *She is sings beautifully,* etc... It is strongly associated with re-dundancy reduction. The general role of redundancy is to protect communication; there is redundancy deliber-ately introduced in the code itself, of which native speakers of that particular code are usually uncon-scious; there is redundancy consisting of *information already at the destination before a particular message is sent, most of which information will not be re-quired for decoding the particular message about to be or being received...*[70] This type of redundancy repre-sents knowledge of the code to an extent that goes beyond what would be necessary to interpret messages. The perception of the existence of redundancy leads to errors in various areas such as pronunciation, where for instance many groups of foreigners reduce the num-ber of vowel sounds by reducing long vowel sounds into

short ones. This happens because the distinction of meaning is independent from the observance of all the distinctions of the sounds, and the learner, having perceived the redundancy existing in the phonological aspect, tends to reduce the vowel system. The distinction between /ə / and /ʌ / would be eliminated, and the learner's English would have six vowel sounds instead of the traditional twenty-four. This six vowel English would not disturb certain speakers of a regional variety of English, but is does disturb language teachers, coursebook writers and speakers of standard English who are unfamiliar with six vowel English and might have trouble understanding it: the reduction of vowels cause homophony resulting in a reduction of protection in messages, which means that the listener has to work harder to understand them. But in this case communication is very rarely impeded because the context helps the understanding of the meaning.[71]

Apart from the perception of redundancy already naturally present in the code, certain teaching techniques increase the frequency of overgeneralized items and structures. They are structural techniques such as pattern drills and transformation exercises consisting of sentences that can interfere with each other, and the result would be a hybrid structure. Richards ex-

plains that with a sentence like *She dances beauti-fully* when the learner is asked to transform it into the continuous form he may produce **She is dance beautifully*. This is called overgeneralizing of a structure.

Another reason for errors of overgeneralization is the methodology of teaching by contrast, for example where the simple present tense is presented in contrast with the present continuous and some weeks later the learner produces **He is speaks*.

Richards' second source of errors is the *ignorance of rule restrictions*, which is closely related to the generalizations of deviant structures. In this case the learner fails to observe the restrictions of existing structures as in for instance **The lady who I heard her* In this case the learner violated the limitation on subjects with *who*, applying rules to contexts where they did not apply. It is a case of intralingual transfer because the learner uses in a new situation a rule previously acquired, and this may be a result of analogy or imperfect rule learning. Richards says analogy might be the major factor to explain the misuse of prepositions; *The learner, encountering a particular preposition with one type of verb, attempts by analogy to use the same prepositions with similar verbs,* as with *they said to John* leading to **they asked to*

John, and he suggests that some pattern exercises encourage the application of incorrect rules through analogy.

The third category of errors are those derived from the *incomplete application of rules*. This is the case with questions in English, where the correct system of inversion never seems to form part of some learners' competence no matter how much effort is given to erradicate this problem. Questions tend to appear in the form of statements, a question word may be added to the statement to indicate it is a question or even the auxiliary may be omitted. The reason for this may lie in the classroom use of questions; the teacher asks a question in order to elicit a sentence and the sentence the learner produces is deviant, e.g. *What does Mary give her Daddy? *She give her Daddy to the book.* In this case the teacher would correct the deviant sentence and the learners' attention is very rarely directed to questions. In these situations questions are not used for communicative purposes as they are outside the classroom context and consequently if the learner does not feel the need for mastering questions, why learn them?

Another explanation for this category of error might be redundancy. The question word already carries the meaning and the learner finds the inverted auxili-

ary redundant. In Yes/No questions the rising   intonation is an important factor and again the learner is led to consider the auxiliary in pre-subject position redundant. The reason why this perception of   redundancy resulted in fossilization might be explained by *the strategy of second language communication* where the learner is satisfied with some elementary notions of questions which enable him to communicate quite   successfully; in this case his major motivation   is   to communicate, and motivation to master the   target language question rules decreases.

The fourth category of errors occurred on   account of *hypothesized false concepts.* Explaining   this category Jack Richards makes a strong criticism of the contrastive approach, meaning classroom   presentation based on contrastive analysis of English   with   the learner's mother tongue. If the contrastive approach is applied prematurely, that is, to present items for the first time, it may lead to errors such as   confusion between *so, very* and *too.*

Poor gradation of teaching items may be responsible for the false hypothesizing of concepts, as   for example, when the learner interprets *was* as   a   marker of the past tense *(*One day my mother was   washed . . .)* and *is* as a marker of the present tense *(*She is plays the piano).*

Owing to the way in which many coursebooks present items and the artificial language employed, the learner may misinterpret the use of the simple present tense and the continuous form. The normal use of the simple present in English is for *actions seen as a whole, for events which develop according to a plan, or for sequences of events taking place at the present moment...* Such as the cooking demonstrator *...first I dissolve the sugar in warm water, then I sprinkle the yeast and leave it for ten minutes or until frothy...* or the sports commentator *...now Johnson takes the ball and passes it to Brown...* In coursebooks these events which develop according to a plan would be represented as the following: *...Now Mary is going out of her house. Her boyfriend's coming in a red sports car. Mary is getting into the car...* This kind of representation is responsible for the assumption by many learners that for telling stories in English and for describing successions of events in the present or past, the continuous forms are used instead, to indicate a sequence of events taking place *at the moment* the present tense is used. The continuous tense is used when *a single event is extracted from a sequence, the sequence itself being indicated by the present forms.*[72]

This artificial English in certain coursebooks is a result of too much attention given to the main

trouble spots, presented in contrast, and which lead
to false assumptions about the language. Richards sug-
gests a non-contrastive approach instead, minimizing
the opportunities for confusion *by selecting non syn-
onymous contexts for related words, by treating them
at different times, and by avoiding exercises based on
contrast and transformation.*[73]

On the section on errors whose source was over-
generalization, we have seen that the perception of
redundancy is responsible for various types of error,
and we have given the example of pronunciation. George
suggests that in order to minimize the opportunity for
pronunciation errors in the classroom, which occur be-
cause of redundancy perception, attention should be
given in the classroom to the different types of syl-
lables in the English language, as well as to final
consonants and consonant clusters. Foreign language
learners are said to make large economies with final
clusters and that

> ...*Native speakers rarely omit grammatical
> inflections. For many foreign learners on
> the other hand, the person and the tense in-
> flections of verbs and the plural and the
> possessive inflections of sounds represent
> grammatical redundancies.*
> *For many learners, the most obvious gram-
> matical redundancy in English is the noun,
> verb and pronoun inflections and associated
> formal features...*[74]

In the above quotation George is pointing out

that the final sounds of the inflections of verbs,
among others, are perceived by the learner as gram-
matical redundancies.

3. A Consideration of Three Error Types

3.1. Explanation of Simplification Errors

In this dissertation we are mainly concerned with three simplified grammatical features: the verb inflections -s and -ed, representing respectively the present and the past tense; and the lack of inversion in both Yes/No questions and Wh- questions, and we shall now examine some linguists' opinions on the sources of these errors.

3.2. Omission of Simple Present Third Person Singular Inflection

The omission of the third person singular simple present tense inflection is by no means a unique characteristic of learners of English as a

foreign language. Native English speakers, such as those of Cockney dialect, frequently drop the -s inflection when using the historical present. American natives, speakers of Black English, also reveal this same characteristic. Dillard explains:

> *In the system of its verbs, Black English reveals the greatest difference from white American dialects - as from British dialects - and the closest resemblance to its pidgin and creole ancestors and relatives. At a trivial (morphological) level, one may observe that*
>
> <center>*John run*</center>
>
> <center>*in Black English replaces*</center>
>
> <center>*John runs*</center>
>
> *in standard English; pidgin and creole varieties of English share this surface characteristic, as do more distantly related kinds of English. But careful analysis will show that the Black English form does not fall into the same category as the third person singular, present indicative of the Standard English form.*[75]

We have given, in a previous section, examples of pidgin English where a very noticeable feature is the omission of -s. We shall be examining in this section examples of native Americans (but whose parents were immigrants from different linguistic backgrounds) in New York, of college level, whose written essays included this simplification feature.

Let us now examine in detail some explanations

given by linguists in relation to the dropping of the -s inflection in the foreign language learner's inter-language performance.

According to GEORGE[76], a learner whose mother tongue does not have verb inflections in the finite stem forms always finds the -s inflection entirely re-dundant. *The -s form allows a third person singular subject and gives no information other than that there was such a subject, which must already have been there: this, to anyone, is obvious redundancy...*

In addition to this perception of redundancy the lack of -s very often occurs because of the lin-guistic input the learner is exposed to in the class-room. It is from his teachers that he hears this unin-flected form coming. When any question using the third person singular pronoun or subject word is asked, what the learner actually hears is the correct *he+stem* form: *Does Peter study? Does she sing well?* What greatly contributes to this fact is that *does* is unstressed so that unless the learner pays a considerable amount of attention the auxiliary will be unnoticed and the learner will think he has heard *Peter study, she sing.* The same thing happens when modals are used, both in questions or statements. When the teacher makes a statement or asks a question with any of the modals (Can *she do* it? I think *she* should *leave* now), she ac-

tually says *she/he* plus the *stem* form, and in addition to this, the modals are generally unstressed which contributes to the enormous amount of auditive input of *he/she + stem*. George explains that:

> ...*countless repetitions do not establish the automatic use of the stem+-s form ...and if we plausibly account for this fact by saying that the -s is redundant and non significant and it is therefore not stored in the learner's memory as an association even with he and she, we cannot expect attention by these same learners to does and did which are to them equally redundant, the question designatum being present in the intonation. The learner's brain accepts from preference items which conform to his formed pattern of acceptance and items which bear immediate significance: in both respects she mend is likely to be accepted, and to reinforce all other experiences of the stem form after she and he.*[77]

One could say that the establishment of the stem+-s form is a difficult one, because apart from considering it redundantly non-significant, once the learner has the stem form with *he* and *she* available for comparison his chances of internalising the -s become considerably restricted.

It was previously mentioned that George had said that learners whose mother tongues do not have verb inflections consider the -s redundant. Portuguese is the mother tongue of our informants in this present research and it is a language with very many verb inflections; and yet the lack of -s is one of the main

characteristics of Brazilian *classroom-pidgin-English*. Very probably the explanations George has given (redundancy and classroom linguistic input) are fully applicable to our students as well. WILKINS[78] says that the *most likely morphological error... is the occurrence of want instead of wants. There is no need to look to see whether in the mother tongue the third person singular form of the verb lacks an -s...* He gives another explanation for the lack of the -s inflection. In English there are two distinct morphemes represented by -s (excluding the marker for possessive such as in Peter's book); the first -s is affixed to nouns to indicate *plural* and the second -s is affixed to verbs in the simple present tense to indicate *singular*. Since a plural noun with the -s affix is one of very high frequency of occurrence there is a great danger of confusion, because the association between -s and plural is enormous.

The lack of -s can be said to be a feature of learners' interlanguage regardless of their mother tongue. Mina Shaughnessy says this feature has also occurred in hundreds of native freshmen's essays in New York. She says that:

> *...the grammatically less important errors these students frequently make in their efforts to write formal English, errors that do not seriously impair meaning, are often*

> rooted in language habits that go back to
> their childhoods and continue, despite years
> of formal instruction, to influence their per-
> formance as adult writers. [79]

The above quotation seems to indicate that *gram-
matically less important errors* such as the lack of
inflections, represent a stage in the child's acquisi-
tion of language; it is considered a normal process. A
learner acquiring his second language goes through
similar processes and simplification appears to be one
of the first stages in language learning. Simplifica-
tion at the earliest stages of second language learn-
ing represents a normal process, but if the simplified
features are not erradicated they will become fossil-
ized - hence part of the learner's competence.

The native freshmen Shaughnessy describes have
come from different ethnic backgrounds and their mother
tongues were languages which held considerable differ-
ences from one another, such as Chinese, Yiddish, Irish,
Spanish etc..., yet they all used inflection-simplif-
ied verbs, despite their eleven or twelve years of Eng-
lish based schooling. SHAUGHNESSY[80] suggests that very
probably these students lack of inflections (espec-
ially the -s and the past inflection) has gone unnot-
iced in their classroom speech and even in their speech
outside the classroom, possibly because this lack might
have been hidden *by phonetic blurring and the tendency*

for listeners to hear what is not pronounced - the -ed for example, in supposed to or the possessive s in my girlfriend's song. And most important of all, they always managed to understand the English language and made themselves understood in their communities in the *full range of situations that give rise to speech.* When formal written English was involved they had little or no success and would not identify the real reason for this in written English, usually perceiving themselves - having already been perceived by their teachers - as native speakers of English who for some reason use *bad* English.

SHAUGHNESSY[81] agrees with George concerning the redundandy of the -s form, that since it does not serve any semantic purpose in standard English it remains unlearned, and adds that: *this letter is the only inflection that survives an older system which distinguished number in all tenses and mood.* Consequently it has an *anomalous role in the present verb system.* Apparently simple, perhaps simple to explain, it is not simple to internalize. She explains that the students control the -s form partially: they inflect verbs with no consonant clusters *(pleases)* and omit inflections where there are clusters made of two voiced or two voiceless consonants such as in *needs, likes, puts,* where the -s will be dropped. However, she accepts that

for the major part of the students the problem is more than phonological: it is the fact that the -s is also used to indicate plural and when there is a plural noun in the same sentence as a third person singular verb the confusion increases, such as in this sentence:

The boy hear birds. The boy's father want to show other things besides birds. It good that the boy like birds.[82]

On analysing the *so called native speakers'* written performance Shaughnessy agrees that because the -s serves no significant purpose, number being already indicated by the subject itself or a limiting adjective - the students have very little motivation to master this morpheme, and even if they try to they will still find it difficult to internalize because of the correct *he/she+stem* form in questions, negatives and with modals (previously explained). This also happens in sentences such as *John makes his mother cry*, where the stem form after a third person subject is correct - the Subjunctive according to some grammarians, Phase according to others: where *his mother* is at the same time object of *makes* and subject of *cry*. If this student is surrounded by the correct *he/she+stem* forms (he cannot, by means of his senses, perceive that this *stem* form is always non-finite, for the finite and non-finite stem forms have the same graphic and phonol-

ogical representation), it is very difficult for him to master the *he/she+stem* form because it is redundant and non significant, hardly ever impeding his communication with other speakers - thus *allowed*.

If to the American college-level student whose language at home was not English, but who has lived all his life in an English speaking country, been to an English speaking school and is perfectly integrated in American life, the -s inflection is a difficult feature, we can very well see the difficulty a foreign learner has. One must not forget that, besides those reasons previously studied, there are other factors which might influence the learner's linguistic behaviour: as mentioned previously, in some native dialects such as Cockney the third person singular inflection is normally dropped in the historical present, and the speech of Black English speakers also lacks the -s inflection. We cannot deny the possibility of our students having come across this variety of English by means of either songs, magazines or films. If some native speakers do not inflect - why should they?

3.3. Omission of the Simple Past Tense Inflection

By omission of simple past tense inflection we

are referring not only to the inflection of regular verbs but also to cases when the base form is used instead of the past. We shall see that this simplified grammatical feature occurs in native Americans speakers of Black English, Shaughnessy's native freshmen and the foreign language learner. The lack of the past inflection is very likely part of speakers of various kinds of pidgin English - but to study these varieties in detail goes beyond the limits of our research.

Dillard explains that speakers of Black English do not consistently make the -ed inflection:

> ...But tense, although an obligatory category in Standard English, can be omitted in Black English sentences. The sequence
>
> > ...he go yesterday...
>
> is perfectly grammatical, provided the surrounding clauses or sentences give the needed time cues. Action in the past may thus be represented by the base form of the verb:
>
> > The boy carried the dog dish to the house and put some dog food in it and put some water in and bring it out and called his dog...
>
> In high quality collections of speeches by American Blacks like those of the outstanding folklorist B. A. Botkin, we find
>
> > When the day begin to crack, the whole plantation break out with all kinds of noise, and you could tell what was going on by the kind of noise you hear.
>
> > (Lay My Burden Down, p.60)
>
> Any facile assumption about "historical present" is broken by the occurrence of forms like could in the second example and carried and called in the first. The verb forms bring, begin, break, going and hear are con-

> sistent with occurrence in the past, insofar
> as the grammar of Black English is concerned.
> Such occurrence is non-redundantly marked in
> the language. Whereas in Standard   English
> every verb in a sequence (in a   sentence   or
> in a related series of sentences)   must   be
> marked as either present or past,   in   Black
> English only one of the verbs   needs   to   be
> marked - although more than one   may   be   so
> marked. [83]

Let us now proceed to the study of this feature

in foreign language learners.

George says that it is the way coursebooks   are

designed, presenting items in contrast that lead   the

learner to think the past inflection is redundant. For

a native speaker the -ed is an indicator that   the   ac-

tion is in the past and consequently he does   not   ac-

cept the idea of redundancy. But in coursebooks   based

on the contrastive approach the learner is   encouraged

to feel that it is redundant. The coursebook would use

pairs of sentences such as: *The book is in the bag: it*

was on the floor; I wash the dishes every day: I washed

the dishes yesterday. This is unnatural   language   in

the sense that such pairs of sentences are never brought

together in real life, for the sake of establishing   a

contrast of this sort; consequently, the moment another

past indicating adverbial group or word such   as   last

night, yesterday, once etc... is introduced   in   the

context, *all reason for a further, vaguer, past-indi-*

cation disappears. And he continues:

> *Actually the usual contrast presentation of*
> *go and went (He goes every day... He went*
> *yesterday) is not only psychologically and*
> *contextually unreasonable; it makes no sense*
> *as functional grammar. The sentence He goes*
> *every day ...is of course properly matched*
> *by the sentence He went every day...(sc. when*
> *he was young, etc.), a present iterative*
> *function matching a past iterative not a past*
> *narrative.*[84]

Having seen that the function of the -ed is not

to indicate contrast between present or past, we can

say that a typical context for the -ed to occur is the

narrative. Usually a narration begins with an adverb-

ial expression to indicate the past time setting; if

so, all the sequence of -ed inflections would be con-

sidered redundant. In other case an adverbial expres-

sion is not present and the first verb with an -ed in-

flection would be indicating past time: all the other

-ed inflections would be considered redundant as an

indicator of past time. George continues:

> *Obviously the basis of narration is not the*
> *expression of past time; it could not be,*
> *if only for the reason that narration is ef-*
> *fected in languages which only casually in-*
> *dicate past time; and we should cease to*
> *regard past-time as the designatum of the*
> *-ed inflection.*
> *. . .*
> *...when we narrate we count or recount. The*
> *aspect of counting which matters is simply*
> *that of numerical order or succession: First*
> *(Once)...next...next...or... First (Once)...*
> *then...then...The events of the narration are*
> *related in an order, namely, the order of*
> *their natural occurence.*[85]

However, there are times in which this sequence of events is *broken*, such as when the writer wishes to narrate an event out of order. In this case the succession of -ed inflections is broken and the narrator uses *had+stem+-ed* or *was/were+stem+-ing*, in order to avoid ambiguity or misunderstanding.

Another possible reason for the lack of the -ed inflection besides its being perceived as redundant is that the regular verb inflection /ɪd/, /t/ and /d/ are easily lost in speech, frequently disappearing as in the examples: *She happily walked downtown; They locked the door; He used to ride bicycles*. In addition to this the final sounds /ɪd/, /t/ and /d/ do not exist only in contexts where the simple past tense is required. They occur in the vast quantity of regular verbs and are required to indicate not a small variety of grammatical settings which are: simple past tense *Lucy irritated her boss;* present and past perfect tenses *She has irritated him, She had irritated him;* with passive finite structures or infinite phrases *He has been irritated, He will have been irritated, It is easy for him to be irritated;* in attributive positions in noun phrases *the irritated lady;* in predicative and adjunct positions *the baby is irritated, Irritated, he slammed the door and left.*

Seeing the quantity of situations in which the

-**ed** does occur it is possible to calculate the learner's difficulty in associating the -ed morpheme with the simple past tense especially because the past time is usually indicated by a time adverbial phrase - hence the -ed is perceived as redundant.

Shaughnessy gives examples of her *native* speaker freshmen who reject the -ed in almost every situation:

> *When he was finish I return to find out why*
> *my combatants has left me like that. I ask*
> *them all why and they all had the same*
> *answer. Their were scare. I would has been*
> *scare myself.*[86]

The example quoted above was taken from one of those freshmen's essays. If we read it aloud we may notice that it does not sound so *bad* as when we see it written. *When he was finish I return to find out why my combatants has left me like that. I ask them all why and they all had the same answer. Their were scare. I would has been scare myself.* And here we can find an indication that speech is often blurred and the -ed is probably frequently thought to have been heard; consequently the way they spoke, leaving the -ed inflections, might in its great majority have gone unnoticed (specially because in three consonant clusters the middle one is dropped) - thus uncorrected.

The second language learner in our research has very probably faced these problems found in the native

freshmen's essays as well: when his teacher speaks he thinks he hears the *stem* form instead of the *stem+*-ed in sentences like *She walked to the door, They liked to do it*; all the other forms (examplified previously) which have exactly the same graphic representation as the finite *stem+*-ed contribute to confuse him and do not facilitate the *stem+*-ed form to be associated with the simple past tense; the moment there is a time indicating adverbial phrase to indicate past time, the -ed inflection becomes redundant. We could add all these other factors to the fact that our learners *were* taught by the contrastive method, where the past is *introduced* making contrast with the present tense. By accepting George's statement that this type of contrastive approach presents unrealistic language, therefore permitting the learner to consider the -ed inflection redundant, one can understand the learner's difficulty in mastering these forms, not forgetting the stylistic use of the *historical present* to narrate stories and the fact that many verbs in English have exactly the same form for the present or the past such as *cut, put* and *hit*, increasing the confusion.

3.4. OMISSION OF AUXILIARIES AND INVERSION IN QUESTIONS

Our third point of interest in this disserta-

tion is the learners' difficulties with questions. By
questions we understand *verbal questions* or Yes/No
questions (Are they studying?, Can you do it?, Does he
like tea? Have you been to the beach?) and *pronominal
questions* or Wh- questions (Why is she crying?, Where
do you live? What have you been doing?, When will it
be?) and here we are disregarding those pronominal
questions where the question word is at the same time
subject of the verb (Who wants coffee?).

Examining the first type of questions (verbal
or Yes/No questions) we can see that they indicate that
they are questions by two means: the rising intonation
and subject-finite verb inversion. Very frequently,
when the answer *Yes* is expected or suggested the na-
tive speaker does without the subject-finite verb in-
version (You're going?, They can read it?), except for
questions begining with *Do* as an auxiliary (Do, Does,
Did). George says:

> *When the designatum of the finite verb is
> vague or merely grammatical (like Are, Do),
> this item tends to disappear from the quick
> speech of native speakers, so that They
> coming? Jack stay long? are heard. Many
> foreign learners are ready to do as native
> speakers do.*[87]

The inversion in this case is regarded as redundant,
both by native speakers and foreign language learners.

Pronominal questions or Wh- questions are char-

acterized by falling intonation and have the question word and subject-finite verb inversion to indicate that are questions. But even though pronominal questions have two question indicators (question-word and inversion) like verbal questions (rising intonation and inversion) native speakers do not leave out the subject-verb inversion as they sometimes do with verbal questions. George explains that *the communication contribution of items in average declarative sentences diminishes from the point of view of code, as the sentence proceeds (each occurring item makes the prediction of successive items easier)* but on the other hand, where meaning is concerned the communicative dynamism *increases*. And he continues:

> *In general, the beginning of a sentence tends to be anaphoric, to look back, to link the new with the previous sentence, whereas the end of the sentence, containing the object or predicative adjunct to the subject, contributes new information.*[88]

One can observe that verbal questions follow the same standard pattern of communication from the point of view of both code and meaning, in the sense that, where meaning is concerned, the major question indicator - the intonation - is at the end. Consequently, both the native speaker and the second language learner are allowed to perceive the subject-finite verb in-

version as redundant. On the other hand, in relation
to the point of view of meaning, pronominal questions
do not follow the usual sentence pattern which is to
have words associated with low communicative dynamism
at the beginning and words associated with high com-
municative dynamism towards the end. The pronominal
question has a word which in itself carries high com-
municative dynamism but is placed in a position asso-
ciated with low communicative dynamism. George ex-
plains that:

> Since pronominal questions are characterized
> by falling intonation, intonation gives no
> protection to the code aspect of the sen-
> tence, and a statement word order would then
> mean that the role of the question word would
> be, for English, unusually heavy. Presumably
> high communicative dynamism is sufficient
> burden for the question word and the inver-
> sion satisfies the code requirement, i. e.
> identifies the sentence as a question.[89]

The above quotation explains why native speakers
do not omit the subject-finite verb inversion in pro-
nominal questions; however, in speech the designatum
of the finite verb may disappear (Where are you going?
/wɛə ju gəʊɪŋ /) or they may be reduced as *does*
(/dʌz/) to /z/ or /s/ such as in What does he know
about it? / wɒts hi: nəʊ əbaut ɪt/, which might lead to
confusion because it produces homophony with the re-
duced forms of *is* (What's he doing? / wɒts hi: du:ɪŋ/).

Foreign language learners tend to consider the question word as sufficient indication that it is a question, regarding the invertion as redundancy; besides, this tendency is emphasized by classroom conditions.

In a real life situation the speaker is motivated to ask questions because he wants certain information which he does not have and expects the person to whom he addresses his question to have it. But in a classroom it is the teacher who does most of the question asking so as to elicit a statement, upon which most of the corrections are made (and this procedure, as we have seen previously, leads to other errors). Consequently, in a classroom, the original purpose of asking question is lost. George points out that:

> With its complicated, redundant features, English makes a confusing impression on the learners who are accustomed to straightforward question identification, and overuse of questions by the teacher, with the alternation of forms this implies, often completes the confusion. Many learners just decide statement syntax is sufficient, with intonation and question words to mark questions.[90]

In addition to this, there is the fact that lack of inversion does not impede communication, consequently, the learner receives little or no correction from his teacher in speech. When writing essays or compositions the use of questions is not very fre-

guent. One could say that the learner has very little encouragement or lack of reinforcement (from the formal teaching situation, coursebooks, lack of correction in communicative situations, type of written activities) to master such a complicated feature.

Apart from the reasons for the lack of inversion given above - which are intralingual - one could argue that it is a problem of mother tongue interference because Portuguese does not have this type of inversion. However, RAVEN's[91] study of his six and a half year-old son Rune and his three and a half year-old daughter Reidun shows some interesting points. These children's mother tongue was Norwegian and they had been exposed to English in England and Scotland. They went to English speaking schools but never had any systematic teaching of the language; Raven's research was done during their first months of exposure to the language. He states:

> *That Rune, like L1 learners, make use of the*
> *pattern of the declarative sentences in Q-*
> *wh-sentences is..., rather surprising in view*
> *of the inversion of subject NP and V in Nor-*
> *wegian. It would be reasonable to expect...*
> *What heading you to-yesterday? and What doing*
> *you now? This happens with Yes/No questions,*
> *where typical examples are Climb you? and*
> *Like you food? Again we could speculate as*
> *to whether Rune in these types of sentence*
> *makes use of inversion as a question signal*
> *from lack of a question word...*[92]

On account of this, one can assume that the lack

of inversion in Portuguese is not the sole reason for its lack in English, and we prefer to accept that the difficulty in mastering question rules is also because of *intralingual interference*, sometimes reinforced by methodology and classroom linguistic conditions.

With regard to speakers of Black English we have not found any example of lack of inversion in Dillard's *Black English*; on the contrary, they *do* invert, even though their sentences could be judged *ungrammatical* if compared to *Standard patterns*.

Some typical question structures are:

Standard English	*Black English*
Have you seen him?	Is you see(n) him?
Have they gone there?	Is they gone there?[93]

Here are some other examples:

> *Do my brother be sick?*
> *Is they sick?*
> *Am Im sick, doctor?*
> *Mrs. Smith, is Im failin' English?*[94]

As we have seen, Black English speakers in the United Stated do invert, even though their speech does not follow the Standard English grammatical patterns. However, we have found one example of West Camerounian Pidgin in which the inversion does not occur:

Jacob i-don go?[95]

Unfortunately we have not found enough data to suggest that the lack of inversion is characteristic in the speech of pidgin-English speakers such as immigrant pidgins and pidgins outside the United States.

3.5. ATTITUDES TOWARDS SIMPLIFICATION ERRORS

So far we have studied the three types of simplification errors relevant to our research, searching for explanations of their sources. Let us now examine linguists' attitudes in relation to errors which do not hinder communication significantly - where our simplification features are naturally included. Margareta Olsson says that:

> *...the structure of a sentence proved in this study to be less important for communication than the semantic aspects of the sentence. With this in mind, teachers should perhaps take a more lenient attitude to syntactic errors, all the more so as the satisfaction of being able to communicate even with errors, far surpasses that of being able to utter perfect pattern drills which 'make no pretence of being communication'. Errors are bound to occur more frequently if the speaking practice is less strictly patterned, but recent research has shown that better learning effects will result if simulated life-like situations rather than heavily*

> *structured pattern practice are used in the
> teaching procedure. There is thus reason for
> stressing communicative skills as a means as
> well as an aim of successful foreign language
> instruction.*[96]

Hardly anyone nowadays disagrees with Olsson's claim; natural or free oral communication should be encouraged and constant interruptions by the teacher might have a negative influence on the learner's attitude and the natural flow of communication where the semantic aspects of the sentence are very important. Unless there are *global errors* to significantly hinder communication, not much importance need be given to *local errors* for, as Dulay and Burt say, *you can't learn without goofing.*

Nevertheless, where written English is concerned the goals might be different. As mentioned in a previous section we agree that errors should be seen from the point of view of *functional relativity,* that is, that *there may be as many norms, standards and measures as there are goals and situations.*

Unlike spoken English where the main objective is to encourage the learner's free communication and local errors can be seen in a lenient light, in written English the situation might or might not be similar. There may be a *different goal for each type of written activity* and the attitude towards local errors

may vary accordingly.

If the written activity involves communicative puposes - *for getting and giving information about (or for bringing about changes in) facts or states of affairs* such as in essays, compositions and translation tests, the goals should consistently differ from written activities which involve only the mechanics of the language like transformation exercises, multiple choice and error identification etc...

The application of the functional relativity of errors to different kinds of activity prevents language teachers from being unfair; otherwise how can one cope with learners who in a composition for instance, commit certain local errors and a week later in a transformation test seem to have mastered the same items they had got wrong?

4. Conclusion

The purpose of our research has been to analyse the sources of three types of simplification errors. The absence of inversion in questions can be explained by any of the following: (i) the incomplete application of target rules by the learner owing to the artificial use of questions in the classroom, and the fact that it is the teacher who normally asks most of the questions - in order to elicit statements from the learner; (ii) the perception of redundancy where the learner feels that in Wh- questions the question word already carries enough meaning as a result of which he feels the inversion of the auxiliary is redundant; similarly in Yes/No questions the rising intonation is considered sufficient indication that his utterance is a question; (iii) the fact that the strategy of second language communication fulfils the learner's main objective, i.e. communication, resulting in a reduction of motivation to master the target language rules for forming questions; (iv) the fact that the auxiliary in

questions is frequently unstressed and sometimes dropped in Yes/No questions with *BE* and *HAVE* by native speakers.

The reasons for the dropping of the simple present tense inflection -s can be: (i) native English speakers of non-standard dialects frequent omission of this item by... (ii) the subject is almost always marked for person and number; (iii) there are many cases where this subject is immediately followed by an un-inflected form of the verb; (iv) confusion between the two morphemes represented by -s - one affixed to nouns to indicate plural and the other affixed to verbs indicating singular; (v) the strategy of second language communication dictates to the learner that his goal is achieved without his consistently inflecting the -s - hence the random lack of this inflection becomes fossilized and part of the learner's competence.

The omission of the simple past tense inflection can be explained by: (i) the fact that native speakers of non-standard varieties of English do not consistently make use of the past inflection; (ii) classroom linguistic material based on the intralingual contrastive approach, which brings together artificial pairs of sentences and reinforces (iii) the perception of redundancy already present in the language - an adverbial indicating past tense is sufficient to make

the learner consider the past inflection redundant; (iv) phonetic blurring which makes the inflections of regular verbs /t/, /d/ and /ɪd/ often go unnoticed in normal speech; (v) other structures apart from the simple past which include the -ed inflection in regular verbs, decreasing the learner's association of -ed with past tense; (vi) the stylistic use of the historical present to narrate stories; (vii) many verbs in English have exactly the same form for present and past - such as cut, put, hit; (viii) since the past inflection is perceived as redundant, the strategy of second language communication enables the learner to feel the context to be sufficient for communicative purposes.

We have enumerated the possible sources for the grammatical errors concerning our problem, and all the three of these simplified features arise from the strategy of second language communication. When analysing Selinker's five processes of language learning we saw that the strategy of second language communication produces fossilizable items, rules and subsystems resulting from an identifiable approach by the learner towards native speakers (or his teacher, in a classroom situation). He may feel that if his attention is focused on grammar while he is attempting to communi-

cate meaning, he will become less fluent, causing the listener to lose patience with him. Consequently his attention is more focused on the transmitting of meaning than on form. This appears to be a good explanation for the variabilities in performance we observed, where the frequency of simplification errors was higher in written activities involving meaning and communication of ideas and attitudes than in those written tests requiring the learner's attention to be focused only on the form of the language. In addition to this the strategy of second language communication dictates to the learner that he has achieved his goal (communication) - thus learning stops, leaving fossilized items which remain latent in the learner's interlanguage competence and reemerge (phenomenon of backsliding) in the learner's interlanguage performance whenever his attention is concentrated on new and difficult subject/ matter.

We have also seen that the traditional Chomskyan distinction of competence and performance does not provide us with an explanation of our problem. It is essential to include the sociolinguistic dimension in the concept of competence in order to understand the variabilities of interlanguage performance within individual learners. The concept of error has been examined as well and we have seen that the error-mistake

distinction is not flexible enough to embrace the nature of our problem, to which the view of goal-related errors *(there may be as many norms, standards and measures as there are goals and situations)* seems to be more applicable.

None of the theoretical works considered, in short, have provided us with a model for the evaluation of individual performance variation. Until such time as this variable is systematically accounted for, the teacher is left with the responsibility of choosing which manifestations of a learner's knowledge of the target language are to be the basis of evaluation.

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ERRATA

Onde se lê this difference observed within individual learners,
leia-se this difference being observed within individual learners. (p.viii)

Onde se lê matter of formation whereas Chomsky, leia-se matter of habit formation whereas Chomsky. (p.16)

Onde se lê for production as the capacity for Negro, leia-se for production such as the capacity for Negro. (p.19)

Onde se lê Hymes illustrates a case in , leia-se Hymes cites a case in. (p.19)

Onde se lê communicative as a whole, leia-se communicative context as a whole. (p.22)

Onde se lê objetive , leia-se objective. (p.33)

Onde se lê fossibilized, leia-se fossilized. (p.34)

Onde se lê of second language have brought light to other,
leia-se of second languages have brought to light other. (p.44)

Onde se lê comunicative , leia-se communicative. (p.52)

Onde se lê occurence, leia-se occurrence. (p.75)

Onde se lê begining, leia-se beginning . (p.79)

Onde se lê puposes , leia-se purposes. (p.87)

Onde se lê (i) native English speakers of non-standard dialects frequent omission of this item by... leia-se (i) frequent omission of this item by native English speakers of non-standard dialects. (p.89)

Onde se lê SVARTVICK, leia-se SVARTVIK. (p.95)

Onde se lê Recorded Tape, leia-se British Council Tape Recording. (p.101)