

THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING COMPOSITION  
IN  
SYRIAN UNIVERSITIES

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**THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING COMPOSITION IN SYRIAN UNIVERSITIES**

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**To my parents**

**&**

**Mouhammed**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that there is an urgent need to reform current methods of teaching English composition to Syrian university students. It shows how current teaching methods relating to writing skills in English, especially methods seeking to develop strategies for organising information beyond the sentence level, are ineffective. Having identified shortcomings in current approaches to writing skills - and since composition is almost a neglected area in English classes in Syrian universities - this study proposes a set of detailed practical proposals for teaching English composition to Syrian university students. In doing so, it takes its directions from analysis, within the thesis, of writing problems faced by Syrian students of English.

Generally, the principle underlying current methods of teaching English as a foreign language in Syria is that of a focus on providing students with knowledge of English grammar. Syrian educationalists believe this by itself is enough to produce students who are competent in writing. To find out how efficient such methods actually are, or whether they produce the results aspired to, an examination of grammatical errors in the performance of a group of Syrian students is carried out.

Besides the question of the effectiveness of current methods of grammar teaching, however, this research also explores other issues, especially issues concerning strategies used for organising information at both the sentence and paragraph level. The second objective of the study, then, is to assess whether current teaching

methods are successful in producing generally competent writers in English. To meet this second aim, a corpus of data is collected and analysed on the basis of arguments put forward by Kintsch (1974) and Sanford and Garrod (1981). As well as investigating issues of information structure in students' writing, this analysis makes it possible to confirm or disconfirm Kaplan's Contrastive Rhetorical Hypothesis (1966), and so reflects on the broad question of cross-cultural difficulties in composition that EFL students routinely face.

In the light of the above findings, two types of proposal are made: recommendations regarding directions for future studies in contrastive rhetoric and error analysis, and for the teaching of writing in Syria in particular. It is suggested at the beginning of the thesis that there is an urgent need for a change in emphasis in the writing practices carried out in Syrian university classes. The thesis concludes that, instead of concentrating primarily on the teaching of grammatical rules, the communicative functions of writing need to be given more attention.

Since ways of teaching writing depend on appropriate modes of assessing writing, the thesis ends with a proposed new schedule of assessment to suit the change in teaching focus outlined in the thesis. Presentation of this new model of assessment is linked to critical description of the ways in which writing is currently assessed in Syrian university classes; and suggestions for future research in assessment are offered.

## GENERAL NOTES

### 1. NOTES ON TRANSCRIPTION

The following table gives a description of the Arabic consonants, semi-vowels and vowels to be used in the transcription of the Arabic examples used in this thesis.

#### 1.1. Arabic Consonants:

/b/ voiced bilabial plosive

/m/ voiced bilabial nasal

/f/ voiceless labiodental fricative

/θ/ voiceless dental fricative

/d/ voiced dental fricative

/Z/ voiced velarized dental fricative

/s/ voiceless alveolar fricative

/S/ voiceless velarized alveolar fricative

/z/ voiced alveolar fricative

/t/ voiceless alveolar plosive

/T/ voiceless velarized alveolar plosive

/d/ voiced alveolar plosive

/D/ voiced velarized alveolar plosive

/n/ voiced alveolar nasal

/r/ voiced alveolar flap

/l/ voiced alveolar lateral

/j/ voiced palato-alveolar affricate

/j/ voiceless palato-alveolar fricative

/k/ voiceless velar plosive

/X/ voiceless uvular fricative  
/ɣ/ voiced velar fricative  
/q/ voiceless uvular stop  
/ʕ/ voiced pharyngeal fricative  
/ħ/ voiceless pharyngeal fricative  
/?/ glottal stop  
/h/ voiceless glottal fricative

### 1.2. Arabic Semi-vowels:

/w/ voiced bilabial semivowel  
/y/ voiced palatal semivowel

### 1.3. Arabic Vowels:

Arabic has six vowels: three short and three long. Note that length of the vowel is indicated by duplicating the vowel:

|                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| /i/ short high front  | /ii/ long high front  |
| /a/ short low central | /aa/ long low central |
| /u/ short high back   | /uu/ long high back   |

## 2. NOTE ON ASSIMILATION

Assimilation is a common feature in Arabic morphology. It occurs in definite NPs and APs, where the definite article al- merges with the consonant which follows it, giving rise to the deletion of the l of the definite article and the duplication of the consonant. However, the process of assimilation is not free. On the contrary, it is limited to some consonants. These consonants are:

(1) /t/, /θ/, /r/, /z/, /s/, /ʃ/, /j/,

/T/, /Z/, /n/, /d/, /D/ and /d/.

To illustrate, let us consider (ii):

(ii) /al-ʃamsu/ becomes /aʃ-ʃamsu/

the-sun

In (ii), the definite article /al-/ is followed by the consonant /ʃ/, and the result is a duplication of the consonant and the disappearance of the /l/ in /al-/, yielding aʃ-ʃamsu. On the other hand, (iii) is ruled out:

(iii) \*aq-qamaru

Assimilation in (iii) is illicit because it involves a consonant that does not belong to the group in (i) above.

### 3. NOTE ON ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used to refer to some linguistic terms, and grammatical entities:

Art: Article

Aux: Auxiliary

CA: Contrastive Analysis

CESP: Centre for teaching English for specific purposes

IL: Interlanguage, the language of the learner while in the process of learning

L1: First or native language

L2: Second or foreign language

N: Noun

NP: Noun phrase

RP: Received pronunciation

P: Preposition



PP: Preposition phrase

S: Sentence

SO: Subject object: usually used to refer to the surface structure of a VSO language where the verb element is deleted in the surface but not the deep structure.

SVO: Subject verb object: usually used to refer to the structure of those languages such as English whose constituents are in the following order: subject verb object.

TL: Target language, the foreign language taught and learnt

V: Verb

VP: Verb phrase

VSO: Verb subject object: usually used to refer to the structure of those languages such as Arabic whose constituents are in the following order: verb subject object.

#### 4. OTHER NOTES

**/\*/:** An asterisk preceding an example indicates that the construction is ungrammatical, or ill-formed.

**Superscripts:** Superscripts are used to refer to footnotes given at the end of each chapter.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

In Syria, current methods of teaching English provide Syrian university students with knowledge of English grammar (conscious understanding of grammatical rules), because teachers believe that students will acquire a knowledge of English grammar capable of giving them ability to produce grammatically acceptable sentences. More significantly, however, this knowledge of English grammar is also believed to be sufficient in itself to produce students who are competent in writing. But are there equally important writing skills (e.g. strategies for organising information which lie beyond or outside the narrow sphere of 'grammar') which must also be learnt if students are to become effective writers? This study answers 'yes' to this question. It seeks to identify shortcomings in current methods adopted in the teaching of English composition in Syrian university classes in order to suggest a set of practical proposals for teaching English composition.

To pursue the aims described above, it is necessary first to understand the operation of current methods of teaching English within the Syrian educational system. Chapter Two, accordingly, contextualises my research: it offers a detailed description of the Syrian educational system, with special reference to the teaching of English writing at university level. I examine the operation of the educational system in general, and how this shapes the methods used

in teaching English as a foreign language. But since the teaching of English is also determined by the particular prevailing reasons for interest in English in Syria, a description is also offered at this stage of the historical as well as the international context of English in Syria, by reference to the world situation of English (Kachru, 1982 and 1983a). Chapter Two also identifies needs of Syrian university students, especially in relation to writing: alternative ways of teaching English composition need to be justified by their appropriacy to specific skills Syrian university students need to learn.

To identify and explain shortcomings in current teaching methods of English composition in Syrian university classes, an analysis of student performance within the prevailing system is also offered, in an attempt to discover how successful the system is in achieving its own professed goals. These goals are dominated by the objective of providing students with appropriate knowledge of English grammar, which is considered to be sufficient to make students competent in writing.

To investigate aspects of the efficiency of the method, a selection of compositions written by first year students at the Department of English Studies at Damascus University is collected and analysed, using Corder's analytic model (Corder, 1978). In an effort to present a theoretical context for this analysis, Chapter Three begins with a discussion of the concepts of 'errors', 'interference', 'transfer', and 'interlanguage'. It then offers explanations of the particular grammatical errors identifiable in

the Syrian learner corpus. My analysis indicates that most of the errors can be traced to interference between L1 (Arabic) and L2 (English). More generally, however, since my Syrian subjects fail to implement the grammatical rules they have been taught, I conclude as regards pedagogic strategy that:

- (1) current teaching methods of English in Syrian universities are not effective.

This finding forms a basis for suggesting recommendations, in later stages of the thesis, for future studies in error analysis, contrastive analysis, error correction, and interlanguage (IL). My orientation with regard to these issues is as follows:

- (2) providing L2 learners with a great deal of conscious knowledge of L2 grammatical rules, and correcting them repeatedly, is not a particularly effective teaching strategy if the aim is to make learners competent users of grammatical rules.
- (3) error analysis and contrastive analysis need to supplement each other's results.
- (4) error correction can be ineffective, since it is not always successful in eliminating errors in students' performances.
- (5) variation in the nature of ILs of different groups of learners is due to learners' differences in exposure to the target language, as well as difference in the nature of the input.

While Chapter Three addresses the question of the effectiveness of existing grammar teaching methods, Chapter Four examines whether current teaching methods are successful in producing writers in English who are competent in organising information at both sentence and paragraph level.

To explore issues in students' writing, namely how efficient students are in organising information units, a corpus of data from an experiment involving eleven Syrian and British students is collected and analysed. This analysis of data, comparing Syrian learners' performance with performance of native speakers in a range of tasks, suggests that Syrian subjects fail to be as efficient as the British writers (judging efficiency in a technical sense based on arguments put forward by Kintsch (1974), and Sanford and Garrod (1981)). My Syrian subjects fail to be efficient in the specific sense developed by Kintsch that comprehending their writing involves the memory in more distinct cognitive processes, especially those which can be described as 'recalling' rather than 'recognition' (Kintsch, 1974). Accordingly,

- (6) when they write in English, Syrian writers are not as efficient as the native speakers of English in organising information units.

More significantly, my Syrian writers fail to be efficient in English, but not in Arabic, which suggests that:

- (7) Syrian writers' failure is language independent, i.e. it has nothing to do with them being native speakers of Arabic.

My Syrian subjects' success in achieving contextual effects while writing in Arabic suggests that different languages manipulate the same organisational strategies while writing. Thus,

- (8) rhetorical strategies cut across all cultures, because strategies followed to chunk information units and infer the intended message are not exclusive to a certain language group.
- (9) different language groups only vary in realising different cultural concepts because background assumptions are different as a result of cultural difference, and not

language difference.

This, in turn, suggests that reason and logic (the logic followed in organising propositions in a piece of discourse) are universal and not, as Kaplan has claimed (Kaplan, 1966), language dependent. Kaplan argues that the internal logic of languages is different, and this is why different languages use different rhetorics or different styles. One consequence of this view is that native speakers of a language do not have much choice in the rhetorical forms of their writing; and L2 learners of a second/foreign language are likely to transfer the mode of writing of their L1 unless they are taught 'contrastive rhetoric'. Questioning the validity of Kaplan's claims, the study suggests that:

- (10) Kaplan's 'Contrastive Rhetorical Hypothesis' as well as Shouby's (Shouby, 1951) claims about Arabic style, are not sustainable, in that the problems my Syrian writers face are not directly the result of L1 (Arabic).

Exploring the consequences of my analysis in Chapters Three and Four, Chapter Five suggests new ways of teaching composition to Syrian university students. It puts forward proposals geared to freeing students' attention from the constraints of form, directing their efforts towards considerations of the communicative functions of writing. This shift of emphasis is based on the conclusion drawn from my analysis that:

- (11) there is an urgent need for a change in emphasis in the writing practices carried out in Syrian university classes: instead of concentrating primarily on the teaching of grammatical rules, the communicative functions of writing need to be given more attention.

Chapter Five begins by discussing three different views of composing, these being the expressive view (Moffett, 1982), the cognitive view (Flower and Hayes, 1981 and 1984), and the social view (Faigley, 1985), and it explores their applications in language teaching. This introductory section contextualises my approach to writing and the proposals I make in relation to existing research in the field. As part of the concern with teaching practice in this thesis, the chapter also discusses how workshops can be organised and designed (Grellet (1981), Nuttall (1982), and Jolly (1984)); and it provides a range of examples of appropriate workshops. To illustrate fully how the workshops proposed can teach the aspects of language use identified as necessary in the preceding chapters (i.e. how workshops make it possible to explore both communicative function and form), reports on trials undertaken with a number of selected workshops are presented.

Finally, Chapter Six outlines a schedule for assessing writing which aims to be consistent with the new teaching approaches proposed in Chapter Five, and which is linked to a critical commentary on the ways in which writing is currently assessed in Syrian university classes. The chapter begins with a presentation of relevant background information, to clarify the ambiguous term 'assessment' (Rowntree, 1987), and to contextualise my approach to assessment. In order to find out how consistent the marking scheme (adopted by Syrian teachers) is with regard to decisions on students' final product, an analysis of comments by ten Syrian and ten British teachers (who annotated and graded identical

compositions) is presented. Developing the results of Hillocks's (1982) study (which indicate that activities which precede writing are more powerful in causing effective change than assignments alone), and Gee's (1972), Taylor and Hoedt's (1966), and Stevens (1973) and Hausner's (1975) studies (which show that teachers' comments on students' compositions have little effect on the quality of later writings), my analysis highlights the arbitrariness and idiosyncrasy of marking and comments. I argue that marking can be shown to be an unreliable mode of assessment of writing, and can even undermine students' progress. On the strength of this discussion, Chapter Six reaches the following conclusions:

- (12) emphasizing the grammaticality of the final product can be misleading. Students are led to believe that grammaticality is the most important factor which has to be maintained to produce an acceptable piece of writing.
- (13) summative assessment (marking) does not provide good evidence of how good students' performances are; marks are arbitrary and idiosyncratic.
- (14) general comments are unlikely to be beneficial to students, because they can be applied to any piece of writing.
- (15) instructional activities which precede writing can have powerful effects on enhancing the quality of students' writing.
- (16) comments have no significant effect on the quality of students' writings; so time used for commenting could be better redirected towards planning activities. In the case of Syrian learners, time used practising drills (as a remedy for grammatical errors) might be better used in planning activities and carrying them out in the class.

Besides new ways of teaching composition, appropriate modes of assessment of writing are needed to suit change in the focus:



continuous feedback and peer editing could usefully be introduced for this purpose.

#### A Summary Of Research Findings

For ease of reference, the main findings of this thesis are presented here, and are also summarised in Chapter Seven. The page number in brackets indicates where the finding is discussed within the relevant chapter. They are:

- (1) current teaching methods of English in Syrian universities are not effective (page 127).
- (2) providing L2 learners with a great deal of conscious knowledge of L2 grammatical rules, and correcting them repeatedly, is not a particularly effective teaching strategy if the aim is to make learners competent users of grammatical rules (page 129).
- (3) error analysis and contrastive analysis need to supplement each other's results (page 123).
- (4) error correction can be ineffective, since it is not always successful in eliminating errors in students' performances (page 125).
- (5) variation in the nature of ILs of different groups of learners is due to learners' differences in exposure to the target language, as well as difference in the nature of the teaching input (page 126).
- (6) when they write in English, Syrian writers are not as efficient as the native speakers of English in organising information units (page 170).
- (7) Syrian writers' failure is language independent, i.e. it has

nothing to do with them being native speakers of Arabic (page 170).

(8) rhetorical strategies cut across all cultures, because strategies followed to chunk information units and infer the intended message are not exclusive to a certain language group (page 188).

(9) different language groups only vary in realising different cultural concepts because background assumptions are different as a result of cultural difference, and not language difference (page 188).

(10) Kaplan's 'Contrastive Rhetorical Hypothesis' as well as Shouby's (Shouby, 1951) claims about Arabic style, are not sustainable, in that the problems my Syrian writers face are not directly the result of L1 (Arabic) (page 189).

(11) there is an urgent need for a change in emphasis in the writing practices carried out in Syrian university classes: instead of concentrating primarily on the teaching of grammatical rules, the communicative functions of writing need to be given more attention (page 252).

(12) emphasizing the grammaticality of the final product can be misleading. Students are led to believe that grammaticality is the most important factor which has to be maintained to produce an acceptable piece of writing (page 273).

(13) summative assessment (marking) does not provide good evidence of how good students' performances are; marks are arbitrary and idiosyncratic (page 272).

(14) general comments are unlikely to be beneficial to students,

because they can be applied to any piece of writing (page 275).

(15) instructional activities which precede writing can have powerful effects on enhancing the quality of students' writing (page 285).

(16) comments have no significant effect on the quality of students' writings; so time used for commenting could be better redirected towards planning activities. In the case of Syrian learners, time used practising drills (as a remedy for grammatical errors) might be better used in planning activities and carrying them out in the class (page 286).

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Context Of Current Methods For Teaching English In Syria:

#### Composition In Syrian University Classes

##### 2.0. Introduction

This thesis outlines an urgent need for reforming current methods of teaching English composition to Syrian university students. It suggests that current teaching methods relating to writing skills in English, especially methods seeking to develop strategies for organising information beyond sentence level, are ineffective. Thus, the main objectives of this study are:

- (1) to identify and explain shortcomings in current approaches to teaching writing skills to Syrian university students.
- (2) to propose alternative ways of teaching English composition to Syrian university students.
- (3) to investigate whether current teaching methods are linked to appropriate modes of assessment.

Besides pursuing these three objectives, however, the thesis also comments on issues related to error analysis, contrastive analysis, contrastive rhetoric, and assessment in the light of the Syrian teaching situation, and seeks to reach theoretical, as well as pedagogical, conclusions.

To identify shortcomings in current methods of teaching English composition in Syrian university classes, it is necessary to understand the context for such work within the Syrian educational system. For this reason, an initial outline of the Syrian educational system is presented:

(a) to contextualise my discussion of the ineffectiveness of teaching methods currently followed, since the teaching of English composition in Syrian university classes is dependent on general policies in the Syrian educational system.

and (b) to familiarise non-Syrian readers with general and specific features of the methods of teaching of English composition in Syrian university classes.

Detailed presentation of the Syrian educational framework is the subject matter of this chapter. But more specifically, Chapter Two aims to consider the teaching of writing to Syrian university students in relation to the following practical issues:

- (1) When do Syrian students start learning English?
- (2) What methods are used in teaching English as a foreign language to Syrian students, specifically in higher education?
- (3) What functions does English fulfil in the Syrian context?
- (4) Why is English taught in Syria?
- (5) What is the status of English in Syria, i.e. why is it that English is the first foreign language to be taught after Arabic?

Each of these questions is addressed in the sections which follow.

## 2.1. Importance of English in Syria

### 2.1.1. Historical context: colonialism (French and English)

Between 1925 - 1947, Syria was occupied by France; hence French was the colonial language. Both French and Arabic were taught at schools during the French occupation and shortly after Independence. Certainly, this does not mean that all Syrians knew French and

nobody knew English. There were some people who knew English - mainly people who were planning to pursue a degree in English language and literature. But certainly, most people were interested in French more than in English since French, besides being the colonial language, was also at the time an international language. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, French was on firm foundations (see Roberts (1963)). From 1877, the French empire developed, due to the French colonial scheme of expansion as well as economic protection. This growth of the French empire led to the global spread of French. Thus, being an international language as well as the colonial language, French was the first foreign language to be learned in Syria after Arabic. However, this status given to French did not last long. In the sixties, the decline of French as an international language brought about a shift towards English as the first foreign language to be learnt (see Kachru (1983a)) by the majority of Syrian students. A survey carried out by the Syrian Ministry of Education, (see tables (2.1.) and (2.2.)), shows clearly the competition between French and English during this period. In the sixties, the number of students learning English was much bigger than the number learning French, (see diagrams (2.1.), (2.2.), (2.3.), and (2.4.)). In the seventies, French recovered its position again: the number of learners increased, while the number of English learners decreased, compared with numbers of French and English learners in the sixties, (see diagrams (2.1.), (2.2.), (2.3.), and (2.4.)). The revival of French was only partially successful, however: success - in terms of numbers of learners - did not last long, since English took over

again in the eighties, (see diagrams (2.1.), (2.2.), (2.3.), and (2.4.)).

**Table (2.1.)**

The following table gives numbers of students taking French or English as a subject in the Preparatory (Intermediate) Study Certificate Examination. (E: stands for English, F: stands for French)

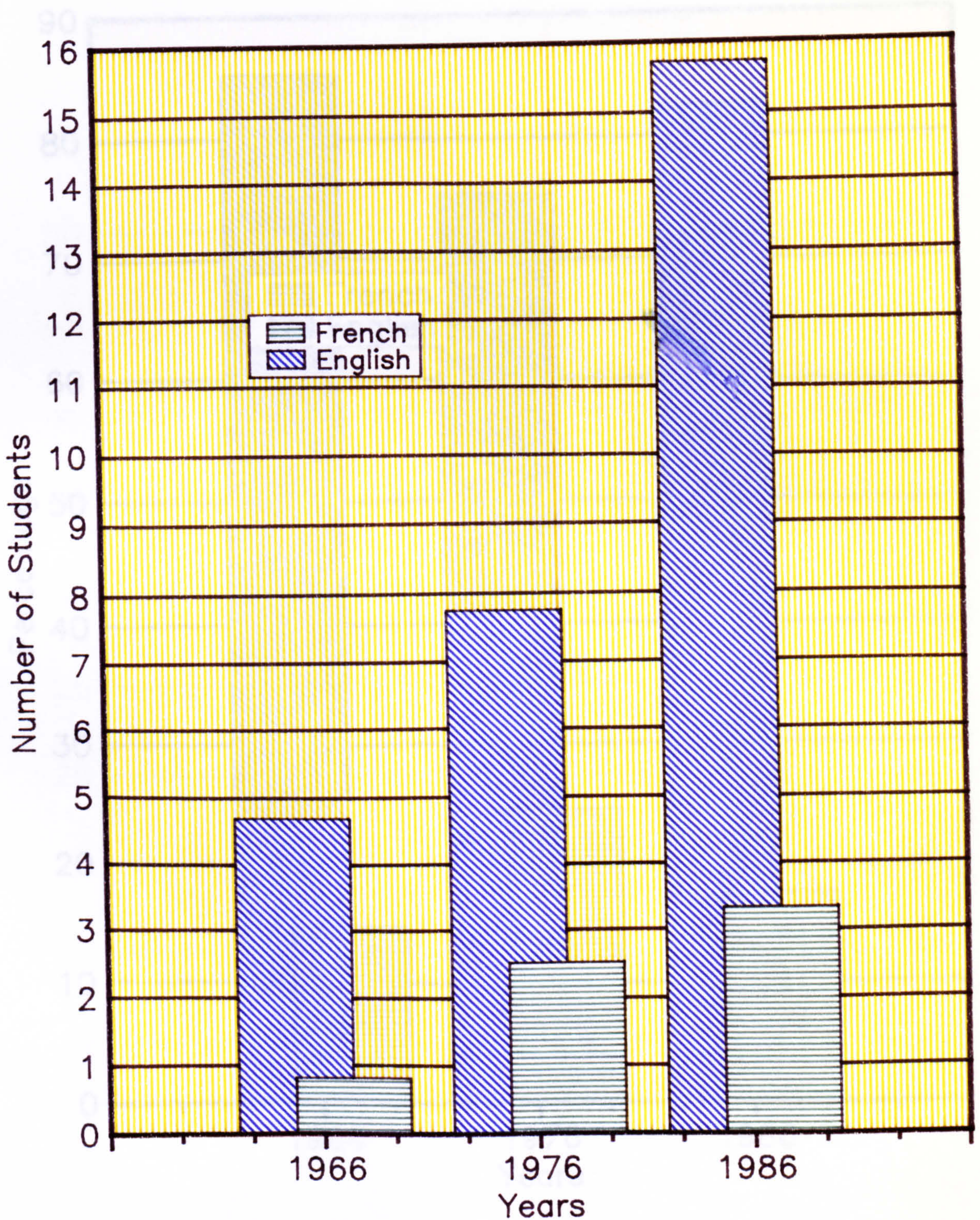
| Number of students sitting the<br>Preparatory Study Certificate Examination |         |      |         |       |         |       |
|---|---------|------|---------|-------|---------|-------|
| academic year   | 66 - 67 |      | 76 - 77 |       | 86 - 87 |       |
|   | E       | F    | E       | F     | E       | F     |
|   | 46992   | 8100 | 77486   | 25297 | 157218  | 33343 |

**Table (2.2.)**

The following table gives numbers of students taking French or English as a subject in the Secondary Study Certificate Examination. (E: stands for English, F: stands for French)

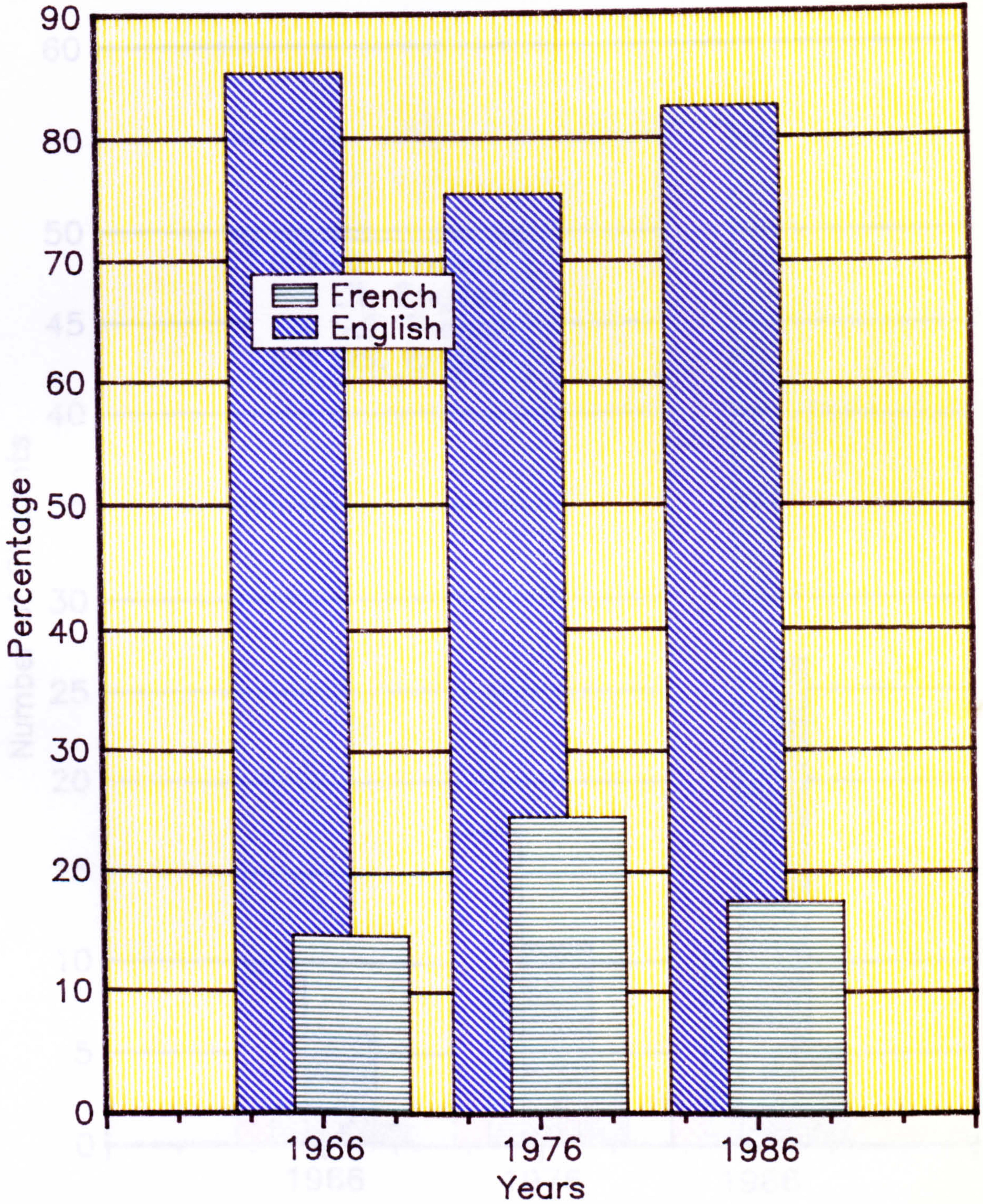
| Number of students sitting the<br>Secondary Study Certificate Examination |         |      |         |      |         |       |
|---|---------|------|---------|------|---------|-------|
| academic year   | 66 - 67 |      | 76 - 77 |      | 86 - 87 |       |
|   | E       | F    | E       | F    | E       | F     |
| Type of Baccalaureate   |         |      |         |      |         |       |
| Scientific  | 9394    | 2016 | 17267   | 9116 | 55774   | 10436 |
| Literary  | 6236    | 1087 | 11140   | 3386 | 26737   | 5375  |

\*10<sup>4</sup>



*Number of students sitting the  
Preparatory Study Certificate Examination  
Diagram (2.1.)*

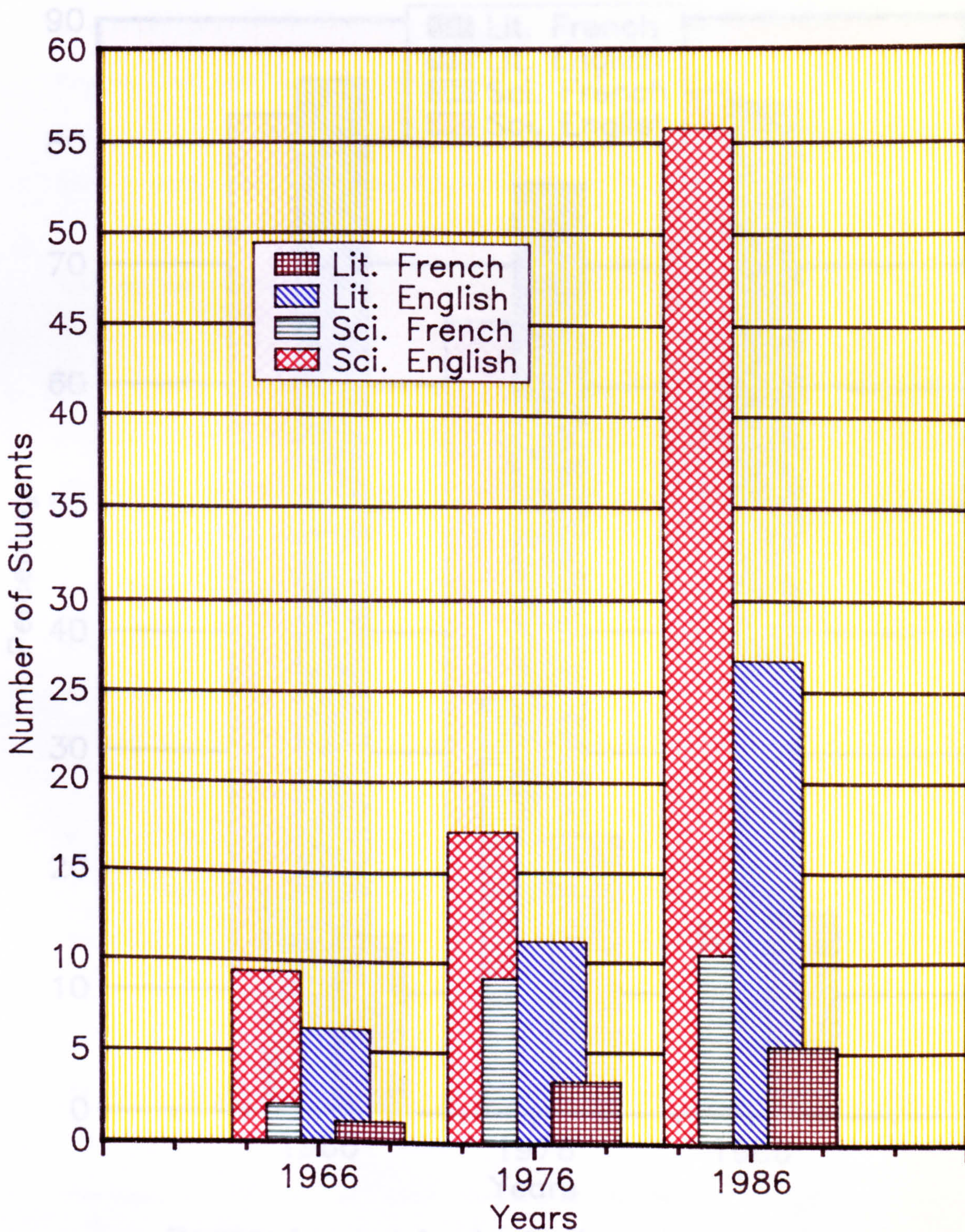




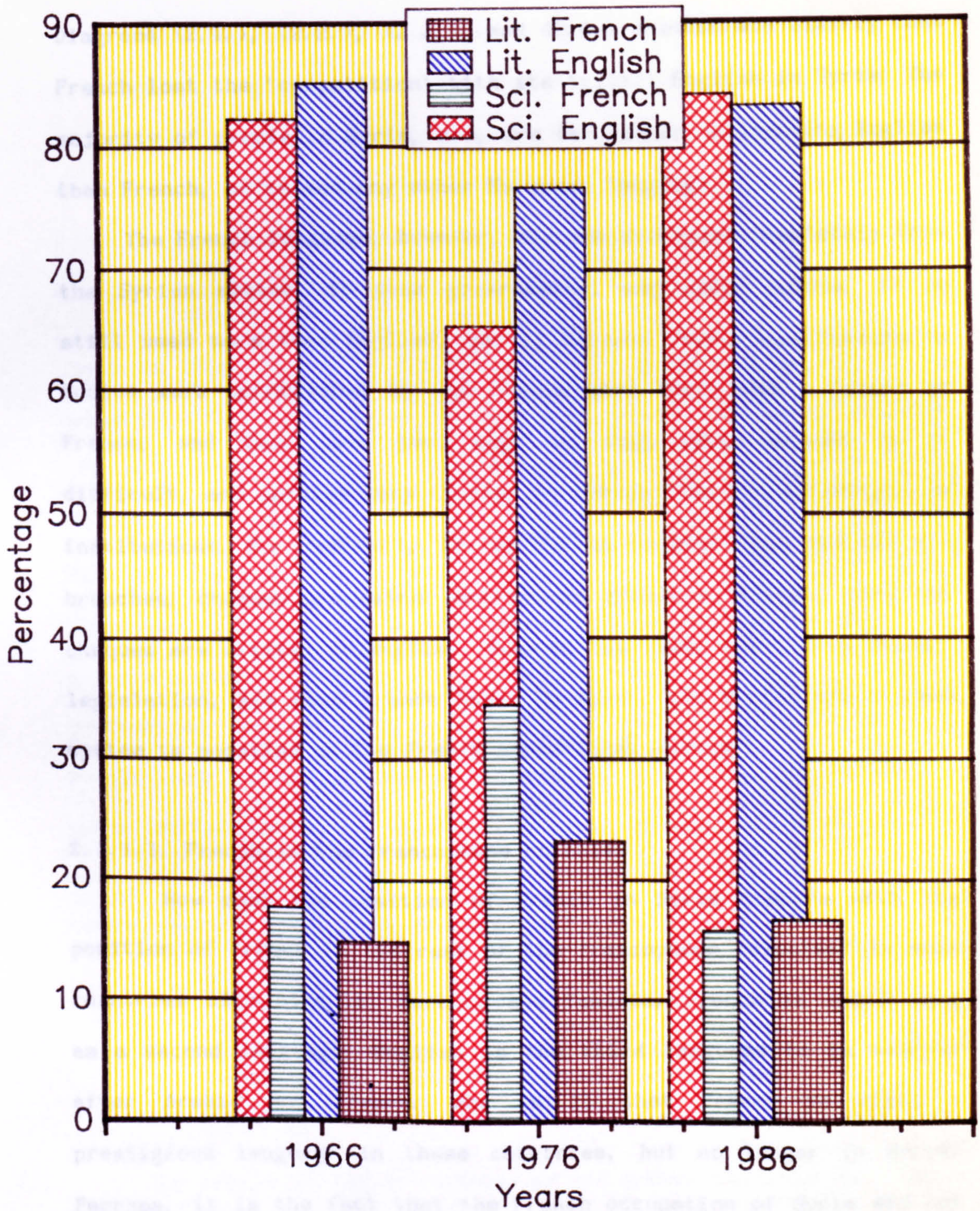
Percentage of students sitting the Preparatory Study Certificate Examination

Diagram (2.2.)

\*10<sup>3</sup>



Number of students sitting the  
Secondary Study Certificate Examination  
Diagram (2.3.)



*Percentage of students sitting the Secondary Study Certificate Examination*

**Diagram (2.4.)**

Diagrams (2.1.), (2.2.), (2.3.), and (2.4.) demonstrate clearly that French lost the 'competition' with its 'rival' English in Syria. The majority of people in Syria, now, are far keener on learning English than French, or indeed any other European language.

The French language, however, did not disappear completely from the Syrian system. In some governmental and other bodies, it is still used more than English, partly because these institutions or bodies were established by the French when Syria was a colony of France; and they have been kept as they were because it is difficult, and perhaps very costly, to change them and establish new institutions. For instance, in the Syrian Central Bank and all its branches, cheques are either written in Arabic or French; very few cheques are written in English. Some of the laws, apart from Islamic legislation, are also French laws. Moreover, the Syrian educational system is modelled on the French educational system.

#### 2.1.1.1. French in the francophone colonies

How does the position of French in Syria compare with the position of French in the rest of the francophone colonies? In some countries like Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, French is still used as a second language; English is the third language to be learned after Arabic and French. Why is it that French is still a prestigious language in these countries, but no longer in Syria? Perhaps, it is the fact that the French occupation of Syria did not last as long as that of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. In Algeria, for instance, French largely maintained its position for one hundred years, even after the bitter war of independence.

In the Magreb countries and Syria, French is used as the prestigious language of the ruling class; and with French in use for a long period this leads to greater functional distribution: i.e. much broader and extended use in colonial society. So colonialism

not only bequeathed the French language to Morocco but also made it dominant in public administration, in the economic sector and in the educational system. (Brown, 1979: 28)

There is less effect of France's cultural colonialism in Syria, as compared with that of North Africa. Since in Syria the French stayed for only about 22 years, they did not have enough time to carry through the policies of French which were adopted in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia; in effect, to make French the only official language. In Syria, French was never the only language of education. A large number of schools still retained Arabic as their language of instruction, whereas in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, most educated people were trained in French, not Arabic. Even after independence - again unlike Syria - Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia could not easily make Arabic the official language because most people involved in education were themselves educated in French.

In theory, according to the Moroccan Constitution framed after independence, Arabic became the country's official and national language; in practice, French reigns supreme in the political, economic and cultural domains and is likely to continue to do so for some time to come. (Brown, 1979: 28)

The length of the occupation period seems, then, to have had a major role in strengthening cultural relations between France and its ex-colonies, especially Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia. In Syria, on the other hand, the period of occupation was insufficient to establish any strong ties.

French dominance of its ex-colonial territories seems to remain strong so long as the connection is a *cultural* one involving French language and education plus the air-freighting of French media. (Tunstall, 1977: 260)

As a consequence, since France lost some of its connections in Syria, the French language could not easily remain dominant (see tables (2.1.), (2.2.), and diagrams (2.1.), (2.2.), (2.3.), and (2.4.)). Indeed, all indications show that English in Syria is taking over from French. Not only is it more popular than French, it is now also the first foreign language to be learned in Syria: French lies in second place.

The above discussion of competition between English and French in Syria suggests that there is great interest in English. But it is still important to ask whether the Syrian educational system is successful in meeting the needs of Syrian learners of English, and in particular of Syrian university students. Whether the system is or is not successful in this respect is an empirical question. Tentative answers will be provided in Chapters Three and Four, where an analysis of available data is presented.

Competition between French and English in Syria is part of a more general international competition between English and other languages in the world. Increasingly, more and more people in the world are learning English, as a result of its associations with economic, technological and political power. These associations are also fostered by non-English speakers' (non-native speakers of English) interests. For example, some Syrians feel that English is needed as the medium of tourism, of the popular media, of technical

publications, and of academic studies and publications. English is well established as an international or universal language.

#### 2.1.2. International context: international uses of English

French appears to have lost its 'competition' with its 'rival' English, in Syria, not only as a result of the relatively weak cultural ties established between Syria and France during the colonial period, but also as a result of the international increase of interest in English. English is used in Syria as an international language by both public and private sectors for a wide range of purposes: writing business letters, arranging deals between companies, and many others. English is also employed for interpersonal uses, such as writing letters to non-Arabic speakers' friends, requesting magazines, publications, etc. In private commercial schools where English is taught, customers tend to be 'working adults and a small proportion of students (mainly university students)' (British Council report, 1984: 9). A large number of Syrian employers are interested in English to help them in doing their job better.

English, then, is the primary foreign language studied in Syria for international purposes; and there are several general factors which have helped English to attain this unique international position (c.f. Fishman, (1977) and (1983), and Kachru, (1982) and (1983b)). First, English was a colonial language imposed throughout the vast British empire and more recently the USA. In most of these colonies, English managed to acquire and maintain an important status in the country's language policies. In Nigeria, for example,

it is an official language (Bamgbose (1983)); in Zambia it is recognized as one of the state languages (Chishimba (1983)); in Singapore it is a major language of government, the legal system, and education (Platt and Webber (1980), and Lowenberg (1984)); and in India the Constitution recognizes English as an 'associate' official language, and as one of the required languages in the Three Language Formula implemented in the 1960's, (Kachru, (1982) and (1983b)).

Secondly, after the Second World War the USA was the leading nation in science and technology in the world. The USA also played an important role in creating international markets for science and technology. This, in turn, has made it increasingly difficult for those who are interested in science to pursue either a degree or a job in science without knowledge of English.

Thirdly, English has become an international language of trade and diplomacy, partly because among the leading countries in world trade, five have English as an official language (Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the USA).

These three factors have contributed to the global spread of English; and use of English on such a scale suggests that English has won the race against potential linguistic rivals such as French and Russian, at least for the foreseeable future. According to figures given by Kachru (1983a) there are 275 million native speakers and 115 million non-native speakers of English (see diagrams (2.5.), and (2.6.)). That is 33.1% of English speakers are non-native users. Gage and Ohannessian (1977) estimate the number of students in the world receiving instruction in English. They suggest



that 115,000,000 students were enrolled in classes in English, distributed as follows: Asia (excluding USSR) 60,000,000; Africa 20,000,000; Western and Central Europe 15,000,000; Soviet Union 10,000,000; Western Hemisphere 10,000,000. Moreover, Gage and Ohannessian also list the twenty-five countries with the largest enrollment in English (see diagram (2.7.)). Kachru's and Gage and Ohannessian's studies reinforce the claim that English has emerged as a global language.

Native Varieties (in millions) .

|               |                 |                  |                |                  |
|---------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|
| British<br>55 | American<br>182 | Australian<br>13 | Canadian<br>13 | New Zealand<br>3 |
|---------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|

Diagram (2.5.)

(Kachru, 1983a: 36)

Non-Native Varieties (in millions)

|                            |              |                                  |            |                             |
|----------------------------|--------------|----------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|
| Asia (excl.<br>USSR)<br>60 | Africa<br>20 | West and Central<br>Europe<br>15 | USSR<br>10 | Western<br>Hemisphere<br>10 |
|----------------------------|--------------|----------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|

Diagram (2.6.)

(Kachru, 1983a: 37)

| Countries                | Millions of students |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| India                    | 17.6                 |
| Philippines              | 9.8                  |
| USSR                     | 9.7                  |
| Japan                    | 7.9                  |
| Nigeria                  | 3.9                  |
| Bangladesh               | 3.8                  |
| Republic of South Africa | 3.5                  |
| West Germany             | 2.5                  |
| Malaysia                 | 2.4                  |
| France                   | 2.4                  |
| Indonesia                | 1.9                  |
| Mexico                   | 1.9                  |
| South Korea              | 1.8                  |
| Pakistan                 | 1.8                  |
| Kenya                    | 1.7                  |
| Ghana                    | 1.6                  |
| Brazil                   | 1.6                  |
| Egypt                    | 1.5                  |
| Thailand                 | 1.3                  |
| Taiwan                   | 1.2                  |
| Sri Lanka                | 1.2                  |

**Diagram (2.7.)**

(Gage and Ohannessian, 1977: 20)

The wide spread of English in the world - including in Syria - means extra demand for English which, in turn, has to be met by different countries based on the needs of their learners. But has the Syrian educational system managed to meet the demands and needs of its learners, in particular Syrian university students?

The needs of learners of English vary according to the functions which English fulfils in any given context. To describe functional variation between different users of English, Kachru (1985b) views English users from three perspectives, or, in Kachru's words, as 'three concentric circles': the inner circle; the outer circle; and the expanding circle. Users from the inner circle are

those for whom English is a first language in almost all functions. In the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, English is the primary language in this sense (though some of these regions are not exclusively English-speaking). The outer (or extended) circle refers to non-native users who use an institutionalised, second language variety of English, and who have gone through extended periods of colonisation by users from the inner circle. Such users of English are found on almost every continent: for example, in Nigeria, Kenya, the Republic of South Africa, and Ghana in Africa; Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka in South Asia; and the Philippines, Singapore, and Malaysia in Southeast Asia. The third circle (the expanding circle) refers to non-native users of English as a foreign language. Countries like China, Indonesia, the USSR, Greece, Japan, Korea, Nepal, Taiwan, and some of the Middle Eastern countries (including Syria) are good examples of the expanding circle. This long list of nations strengthens the claims of English to be an international or even universal language (see Gage and Ohannessian (1977), Kachru (1981), and Strevens (1982)).

This three-fold dimension of English varieties is significant because users of the outer circle and the expanding circle differ in terms of motivation for learning English and in functional usage of the language. Motivation for second language acquisition involves a mix of two general types: integrative and instrumental. If the L2 learner is willing to identify herself/himself with the members of the other linguistic cultural group and is willing to take on very subtle aspects of their language (Prator, 1968: 474), her/his motivation is integrative. On the other hand, learners who adopt the

instrumental approach consider English as a tool to be used and not as an element of personal identity. In other words, English is learned simply for utilitarian purposes.

Furthermore, non-native varieties of English can be divided into two broad categories: performance varieties and institutionalised varieties. Performance varieties of English have a restricted function in specific contexts (e.g. English used by the expanding circle). In most 'third circle' countries English is used for specific purposes such as tourism, commerce and education. An institutionalised variety, on the other hand, starts as a performance variety, but that performance variety becomes an institutionalised variety if it routinely fulfils functions in 'non-English' cultural contexts. Indian English, for instance, started as a performance variety of English; but it became institutionalised by being used by Indians (who were members of a 'non-English' society) to fulfil both intranational and international functions. In India, since Indians do not share a common mother tongue, English is used as a 'link' language within the country, as well as to link India with the rest of the world. Institutionalised varieties are, then, used by members of 'non-English' societies to fulfil national and international functions across cultures and languages.

Institutionalised varieties of English have a wide range of registers and styles which have gone through a process of nativisation. Indians, for example, have forged not only a national language, but also their own partly standardised variety of English. A massive body of nativised English literature has also been produced, which reflects the distinct identity of the local regions.

The growing importance of non-native norms as languages with specialised functions in communities of non-native speakers, such as Indian English, increasingly affects the position of native speakers as being the only source of English data. In other words, this development of varieties (native and non-native) of English suggests that English is an international property. Accordingly, all varieties should be considered equally acceptable, if they are to be used internationally, (c.f. Smith ((1976) and (1983)), and Kachru (1983b)). Most native speakers of English, however, would not agree with this idea, nor would advocates of prescriptive traditions in language teaching. Advocates of prescriptive traditions think that there is only one single, proper form of English: that used by native speakers (in fact, a minority of native speakers who use accepted 'standard' forms). Traditionally, therefore, in language teaching advocates of prescriptivism give a special place to the native speaker because they believe that native speakers are the only truly reliable source of language data. Moreover, they also think that native speakers know their native tongue better than others. In opposition to this view, Milroy and Milroy (1985) argue that attempts to maintain linguistic standards and to reduce the diversity of English and bring about uniformity have not been successful because 'standard English' is simply a belief, not a proven fact, and cannot be directly imposed. RP (Received Pronunciation of Standard English)<sup>2</sup> has been heard constantly on British radio and television for over 60 years, but only 3 to 5%<sup>3</sup> of the population of Britain actually speak it.

This context provides the main point of reference for thinking about social and educational policies regarding English in Syria. To identify the task of the Syrian educational system more specifically, it is necessary to consider the Syrian situation from a detailed functional perspective. Two main questions arise:

- (1) What are the functions English fulfils in the Syrian context?
- (2) Which variety of English is or should be adopted?

English is used in Syria for utilitarian purposes, especially education and international communication. Since Syria is in the expanding circle, English is not used at all to fulfil national functions within Syrian society.

My description so far focuses on the functions which English fulfils in the Syrian context. But which variety of English is adopted as the medium of communication? As far as varieties of English are concerned, Kachru mentions three sorts of variety: norm-providing varieties, norm-developing varieties and norm-dependent varieties. Norm-providing varieties are used by the inner circle. Norm-developing varieties are used by the outer circle; but they can be either endonormative or exonormative. An exonormative model is a native model used for teaching, (e.g. American or British English); an endonormative model, on the other hand, provides a local educated variety for use as a model for teaching and learning, (e.g. Indian English and Nigerian English). Finally, norm-dependent varieties are used by the expanding circle. This circle is essentially exonormative, since British English or American English provides the model adopted by English language teachers and users. Since English

in Syria is used for international purposes, and since Syria is in the expanding circle, the variety of English adopted by English Language teachers tends to be either standard British English or American English.

English in the Syrian context is, therefore, different in important ways from Indian English or other norm-developing varieties of English: there is, for example, hardly any 'non-native literature' in English written by Syrian authors; and local publication of original material in English in Syria is limited to textbooks and study aids for students in English departments, which are usually prepared by university lecturers. Nevertheless, translation of literary, holy and documentary books is very active in Syria: the Koran, for example, has been translated into English to be read by people whose mother tongue is not Arabic (e.g. Malaysians, Pakistanis, and Indonesians).

Summing up the discussion so far, it can be said that English is needed in Syria because it fulfils a range of important international functions; and it is the first foreign language to be learned after Arabic. Given this situation, nevertheless, one still needs to ask whether the way English is taught - the methods adopted by Syrian educationalists - successfully trains users to fulfil these international functions. This question will be examined in Chapters Three and Four by means of detailed analysis of the performance of a group of Syrian university students. This case study is necessary, if one is to distinguish between the achievements and limitations of a particular group of learners, on the one hand, and the education system more generally, on the other.

But before it is possible to analyse the performance of particular Syrian university students, a general description of the Syrian educational system and its policies is necessary to contextualise my analysis; as I will show, it provides an explanation for learning problems identified in Chapters Three and Four. Moreover, syllabuses and materials are usually devised to carry out the intentions of education authorities, thus, the system could also be a major obstacle for any initiative seeking to bring about educational reform.

## 2.2. Current practices in the teaching of English in Syria

The aim of this section is twofold:

- (1) to describe how the educational system operates in Syria
- (2) to examine the methods used in teaching English as a foreign language in the classroom.

### 2.2.1. Educational system<sup>4</sup>

The Syrian educational system is centrally controlled by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education. The Ministry of Education holds principal responsibility for the instructional programme in preparatory and secondary schools, including the appointment of teachers. The Ministry of Higher Education, on the other hand, is responsible for Colleges and Universities. Both ministries are responsible for setting the policy, the syllabuses, and also the budgets of their educational institutions. For instance, textbooks and materials for public as well as private schools, intended for use all over Syria, are



prepared and issued centrally, by ministerial order. There is only one examination board which is appointed by the Ministry of Education to set exam questions and also to mark them.

As laid out by the Syrian Ministry of Education, education is divided into four phases: elementary, preparatory, secondary, and higher. The school ladder usually begins at the age of six, with entrance to primary education. The elementary or primary stage covers the first six years of schooling and forms the period of free and compulsory education. Since it is recognized as a birthright in accordance with Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, primary education is free. Foreign languages used not to be taught at the primary level, except by some private schools given special permission by the Ministry of Education to teach a foreign language. Recently, however, (e.g. for the academic year 1989 - 1990) and owing to the high demand for English among Syrian students, English has been introduced at the primary level, from fifth year of the primary cycle onwards. The Ministry of Education intervenes with private schools not only in relation to foreign language teaching, it also insists that they conform with general educational policy and apply the syllabuses laid down by the Ministry. To serve this purpose, the Ministry of Education supervises private schools, gives financial aid to them, and appoints a headteacher for each.

The six years following elementary education are referred to generally as secondary schooling, with the first three years identified, following the French model, as 'first cycle' (preparatory or intermediate), and the last three years as 'second

cycle' (secondary). Syllabuses are divided into the following types: general (academic), commercial, industrial, and agricultural. The national examination given at the end of the preparatory phase is known as the Intermediate/Preparatory Study Certificate Examination. In the past, the teaching of English and other foreign languages has started in the first year of preparatory schooling and continued throughout the six years to the completion of the secondary cycle<sup>5</sup>.

Again following the French model, the examination given at the end of the secondary phase is called the Secondary Study Certificate (Baccalaureate). Instruction is in Arabic throughout the twelve years of schooling. At the secondary level, the general or academic syllabus becomes more specialised, and, after a year of common preparation, pupils choose a programme emphasising either the humanities or the sciences. As a result, there are two types of Baccalaureate: Scientific and Literary.

Finally, at university level, English is taught at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. English in university classes is taught for specific purposes: students are exposed to specialised English relating to the subject they are studying. Before the university level (during elementary, preparatory, and secondary schooling), English is taught for general purposes, on the assumption that learners have not yet decided what professional opportunities they are likely to pursue in the future.

### 2.2.2. Methods used in teaching of English: the traditional (grammar-translation) method

Having described the general mechanics of the Syrian educational system, and where English fits into it, I outline methods followed in teaching English as a foreign language, in particular, and textbooks used for teaching English.

During the 1950s and earlier, there was almost no recommended pedagogic approach in Syria. Teachers were left to select their own materials, and to decide on what techniques to follow in teaching foreign languages. Techniques used involved a mixture of various approaches, including the grammar-translation method and the direct method. In the 1960s, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education decided to provide teachers with recommended techniques for teaching English as a foreign language, and selected textbooks for this. It seems that before the 1960s the two ministries were not fully prepared to unify teaching methods: Syria achieved independence in 1947; and after independence, the country needed to consolidate its position before undertaking large scale reorganisation and reconstruction. It was only by the 1960s that teachers were discouraged from simply choosing any method they wanted to follow in teaching foreign languages.

The method the Ministry recommends to teachers of English follows the main features of the grammar-translation method (also called the 'traditional method'). Learners are provided with a great deal of conscious knowledge of linguistic rules which they memorise, to help them in constructing well structured sentences. Emphasis is on pattern practice and chorus repetition. Sometimes, wall charts

and flash cards are used to demonstrate items being mechanically drilled.

The objective of the traditional method is to help learners to acquire L2 deductively. Learners are taught rules and given specific information about a language, then they are expected to apply these rules when they use the language. The traditional method emphasises the importance of the grammatical rules of the target language, the grammatical ordering of word classes, and accurate translation from L1 into L2. Since the intention of the traditional method is to enable the learner to gain command of the rules of the language - and by language what is meant is the written, not the spoken language - learners are exposed to small segments of the language, generally out of context. They are also supposed to learn bilingual word lists (words and their equivalent in L1).

Despite being the first method officially tried out in Syria, the traditional method is still the one followed in spite of the fact that other methods, such as the reform/direct and communicative methods, have been developed internationally during the years since the initial adoption of the traditional method in Syria. These methods, although specifically designed to reform methods of language teaching such as the grammar-translation method, have so far never been seriously considered as possibilities by Syrian educationalists.

At its simplest, the reason the education system still persists with the traditional method is related to a deep underlying assumption that language teaching should provide learners with knowledge of the grammatical rules of English. This knowledge of

English grammar by itself, Syrian educationalists continue to believe, should be sufficient to produce students who are 'competent' in English.

### 2.2.3. Syllabuses used in the teaching of English

Teaching methods are often classroom enactments or realisations of the particular textbooks and materials adopted. To see how the traditional method works in the Syrian context, it is, therefore, necessary to examine the sorts of materials typically used.

English textbooks are assigned by the Ministry of Education. At the preparatory level, English For Preparatory Schools (Books 1 - 3) are used as textbooks, and are printed and distributed by the ministry. These books do not deal with topics such as the social life and cultural concepts of British people (as is common in many materials related to the traditional method). Rather, they present images of life in the Arab world, especially Syria itself. The socio-cultural contexts of the target language sometimes constitute an obstacle for Arab educationalists, in so far as 'foreign' civilisation and culture do not coincide with the Muslim faith. What needs to be emphasised about this is that Arab educationalists are often keen on modernising their systems of foreign language teaching without westernising them. In the First World Conference on Muslim Education, for instance, the issue of crisis of identity of Muslim learners was discussed by Muslim scholars for whom there are four major problems. They are:

(that) Muslim scholars must reclassify knowledge.  
Immediate research projects should be undertaken to formulate concepts drawn from the Koran and Sunnah for all branches of knowledge as

substitutes for secularist concepts.

Curricula should be redesigned and textbooks written on the basis of Islamic concepts.

Completely new teacher education programmes should be initiated in order to make teachers aware of the Islamic concepts and how they can be used properly and adequately. (Ashraf, 1979: 25)

Scholars are always worried about the Arabic nation in case it slides away from the basic ideals of Islam if new concepts of a completely different culture are introduced to young people (c.f. Andrews (1984), and Abu-Absi (1981)). They want education to be Islamic in character, avoiding Western influence. Arabic countries including Syria, then, view foreign languages as aids to strengthen themselves and their technologies (i.e. learning and education are viewed from an instrumental perspective). The aim of education, as put forward by Alecso (Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation):

... is to bring up an Arab generation that is aware, enlightened, believing in God and faithful to the Arab homeland ... (in Saber, 1979: 6)

This tendency among Arab educationalists - to want education to be Islamic in character, avoiding Western influence - explains why after 1967 all the books used at both the secondary as well as the preparatory levels in Syria have been nationalised: the books are designed by Syrian educationalists who either select books or articles which are considered to suit the culture of Syrian learners, or translate Arabic texts into English.

At the preparatory level, English For Preparatory Schools (Books 1 - 3) are used as textbooks. At secondary level, English For Secondary Schools (Books 1 - 3) are prescribed textbooks. Passages and extracts in these books are taken either from scientific books

or from literary works written by native speakers of English. At the secondary level, students begin to specialise either in Art or Science, and hence the choice of texts depends to a large degree on the field of the student's specialisation. Authentic written texts are introduced at the secondary level, since at university level students will need to consult English references.

At university level, since different learners require different academic vocabularies, English textbooks vary from one department to another. These textbooks mainly consist of two major components: grammar and specialised texts related to the students' chosen academic subject. In the Faculty of Medicine, for instance, Medicine (Books 1 - 2) (for specialised texts), and Kernel Lessons (Intermediate) (for grammar) are the core texts, approved by the Ministry of Higher Education, for teaching English.

#### 2.2.4. Teachers of English

The two ministries (Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education) also appoint English language teachers. These teachers are usually university graduates of a Department of English Language and Literature at a Syrian university. Yet simply being able to speak English and knowing about literature is not in itself a guarantee of being able to teach the language efficiently. So with the exception of those who attend a one-year optional course in the theory and practice of teaching methodology in the Faculty of Education, most teachers enter the classroom without being equipped with teaching techniques:

With the impressive exception of Kuwait, it seems, at the moment, that EFL teaching in the Middle

East is suffering from a basic lack of logical teacher training policy. (EFL, 1984: 35)

Leaving aside the question of whether teachers are or are not trained in teaching techniques, instruction in English is not effective because teachers pay attention only to grammatical rules. Generally, teachers simply prescribe rules which are believed to be in themselves sufficient to produce competent users of English in a range of situations.

So far I have been describing English teaching within the framework of the Syrian educational system to clarify the context of this study, i.e. to examine composition writing in English by Syrian university students. The reason behind my decision to select composition is related to the fact that composition teaching is almost a neglected area within the Syrian educational system, with the exception of the faculties of Arabic, English, and French studies. Having decided to examine composition writing in English, I need first to describe how composition is taught by Syrian teachers.

#### 2.2.5. Composition in English classes

At secondary and preparatory level, students are virtually never asked to write even a small paragraph. Rather, what they are asked to do is to form single sentences: they are given a list of words, (usually five or six), and they have to choose four out of five/six and use them in four separate sentences, e.g.:

Use these words and phrases in sentences of your own:

complain, shoot, gallows, innocent, prickly, as well as.<sup>6</sup>

At university level, students are again virtually never asked



to write even a small text. They form sentences, but never practise writing a paper for a conference, or a report. Instead, their English teacher concentrates on grammar and terminology. S/he gives the students a list of words related to their specialised field. Students learn the terms in isolation, as if language is a mechanical system which simply inserts words into a system of learnable grammatical slots. Students doing medicine, for example, have drills of the following type:

Substitution drills:

1- Have you ever had trouble with your .....?

teeth

arches

feet

jaw

kneecap

chest

ears

2- Bend your ..... this way as far as you can.

arm

head

thumb

finger

foot

index finger?

Composition is only taught to students doing English, French and Arabic studies. Even so, in such departments composition is taught in an abstract way. Students are sometimes given guidelines

such as the following:

- Compositions should have an introduction and a conclusion.
- Each paragraph should have an opening sentence and a finishing sentence.
- Students should use simple sentences.

And so on.

Often, composition classes are used for further practice of grammatical rules of the language in question (either English, or Arabic, or French), because it is believed that practising the grammatical rules of a language is sufficient to produce competent writers of English.

Outside the departments of English, French, and Arabic studies composition is not taught at all, in the simple belief that knowledge of the grammatical rules of English is sufficient to produce students who are competent in writing English.

### 2.3. Identifying the needs of university students

From the outline presented above, it can be seen that (with the exception of the CESP (centre for Teaching English for Specific Purposes)<sup>2</sup> at Damascus University, discussed below) there is an absence of skill development (composition writing) to meet the needs of Syrian university students. This study, then, aims at presenting and evaluating ways of introducing writing as part of the teaching of English at university level in Syria, because as I argue in Chapters Three and Four traditional teaching methods have not met the needs of Syrian university students, and it has led many Syrian university students to find English boring and difficult. My

contention is that this boredom and difficulty follow from the fact that:

- (1) students are not able to use the language for a wide range of purposes.
- (2) imitation alone cannot provide means of identifying tasks learners continually face: they need to create and recognise novel utterances that go beyond the model sentences they have practised.
- (3) classes are teacher-centred, with students as mere recipients. In other words, teaching is considered an active skill and learning a passive one.

Together, these obstacles have resulted in the failure of the Syrian educational system to meet the needs of its learners.

Since my research aims to urge the educational system in Syria to change its methods to meet the current needs of students, it is necessary for me to specify the needs of Syrian university students in relation to writing skills they need to learn in English. However, before proceeding to specify or identify the needs of Syrian university students, it is worthwhile mentioning the only attempt so far to proceed by teaching composition in response to the identified needs of Syrian university students.

### 2.3.1.: Centre for Teaching English for Specific Purposes (CESP) at Damascus University

In 1980, with the help of the British Council, a centre for Teaching English for Specific Purposes (CESP) was established at Damascus University. CESP is involved in both undergraduate and

postgraduate levels. Undergraduate CESP consists of service teaching in all faculties of the university, and is carried out and managed by the faculties concerned. In co-operation with the English Department at Damascus University, the CESP:

(1) advises on curriculum

(2) provides teacher-training in the form of a yearly one week seminar.

The content of the undergraduate CESP courses varies from faculty to faculty, depending on students' needs (for instance, medical students need English more than electrical engineering students; and since electrical engineering students start their project in the final year, they start consulting English references at this stage, but not before, whereas medical students start consulting English references in their first year).

Postgraduate CESP classes are carried out in the CESP, and consist of:

(1) compulsory pre-sessional intensive courses for students who have registered for M.A. study at Damascus University.

(2) optional courses for academic staff.

(3) compulsory intensive courses for Assistant Lecturers wishing to go to Britain for postgraduate study.

Postgraduate CESP courses consist of four levels. Participants can enter at any of the four levels according to a placement test. Course components are general (academic) and discipline-specific (language laboratory, fluency drills, listening to lectures). General academic English classes are themselves of two types: Arts and Sciences, both aided by authentic data in the form of worksheets

displaying academic discourse features, with emphasis on semi-verbal diagrammatic display and referencing, and information organisation conventions. Discipline-specific English is aided by semi-authentic data in the form of:

- (a) recorded fragments of classroom discourse
- (b) recorded fragments of everyday British discourse
- (c) written extracts from a wide range of everyday British texts related to the core course (academic).

Unlike Syrian university teachers of English, the staff at the CESP do not view learning English grammar as the major component of English language teaching which in turn will bring about language acquisition. On the contrary, teachers at the CESP consider the role of language input to be crucial in bringing about language acquisition. Hence the use of worksheets alongside exposure of students to authentic language data. In common with the approaches adopted in the CESP, my research suggests that it is input, as much as or even more than grammatical rules, which results in acquisition of language conventions. Moreover, unlike current teaching methods, CESP teaches composition in response to the identified needs of Syrian university students.

### 2.3.2. Need for performance skills

Like the CESP, this study proposes a range of activities and new ways of teaching English composition which are capable of satisfying the needs of university classes (see Chapter Five). To meet the new needs of Syrian students, however, necessitates the identification of these needs. As a first attempt to do this, a

questionnaire was given out to both Syrian university students and teachers. The aim of the questionnaire was to identify the needs of Syrian university students as perceived by their university teachers, and the learners themselves, and to try on this basis to reach some common point of view. From this common point of view, it should be possible to assess written tasks which students need to learn and practise in English, and hence to devise activities to meet these specific needs. My questionnaire lists a wide range of writing tasks, to be ticked as needed or crossed out as unneeded. Students' answers to the questionnaire represent their expectations as regards their English course. Teachers' answers represent their views of tasks in which they expect their students to be competent. The results of the questionnaire are represented in tables (2.3.), and (2.4.):

Table (2.3.)

Table (2.3.) states students' responses to the (above mentioned) questionnaire. Numbers (1 - 20) refer to the students involved in the questionnaire (numbers are used instead of names). Letters (a - x) refer to the written tasks Syrian university students expect from the English course. They are:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| task (a): write a novel  | task (m): write a recipe                                     |
| task (b): write a letter   | task (n): write a description (of a machine, an event, etc.) |
| task (c): write a play   | task (o): write a newscast                                   |
| task (d): write an academic essay                                  | task (p): write a newspaper article                          |
| task (e): write a report   | task (q): write instructions                                 |
| task (f): write an article for a conference or an academic journal | task (r): write a book review                                |
| task (g): write a poem   | task (s): write research proposal                            |
| task (h): write a short story                                      | task (t): fill in an application for a job                   |
| task (i): write a Curriculum Vitae (C.V.)                          | task (u): write a letter of complaint                        |
| task (j): write sections of dialogue                               | task (v): write a diary                                      |

task (k): narrate information task (w): write a business memo  
 you have learned

task (l): write an article for a magazine task (x): write a review  
 (e.g. of a play, TV programme)

((+) is used to refer to a 'yes' answer, indicated by a tick (✓) in the questionnaire. (-) is used to refer to a 'no' answer, indicated by a cross (x) in the questionnaire.)

Students' responses

|   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| a | - | - | - | - | + | + | - | - | - | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | +  |
| b | + | + | - | + | - | + | - | - | + | +  | +  | -  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | -  |
| c | - | - | - | - | + | - | - | - | - | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | +  |
| d | - | + | + | + | + | + | - | + | + | +  | -  | -  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | -  |
| e | + | + | + | - | - | + | - | - | - | +  | +  | -  | +  | +  | +  | -  | +  | -  | +  | -  |
| f | - | - | + | + | - | - | - | - | - | -  | -  | -  | +  | +  | +  | -  | +  | -  | -  | +  |
| g | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | -  | -  | -  | +  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | +  |
| h | + | + | + | + | - | + | - | + | + | -  | -  | -  | +  | -  | -  | +  | -  | -  | +  | -  |
| i | - | + | + | + | - | + | - | - | - | -  | -  | -  | -  | +  | -  | -  | +  | -  | +  | -  |
| j | - | - | + | + | - | - | - | + | - | -  | -  | -  | -  | +  | -  | -  | -  | -  | +  | -  |
| k | + | + | + | + | - | + | - | + | - | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | -  | +  | +  | +  | +  | -  |
| l | - | - | - | + | + | - | - | - | - | -  | -  | -  | -  | +  | +  | -  | +  | -  | +  | -  |
| m | - | - | - | + | + | - | - | - | - | -  | -  | -  | -  | +  | -  | -  | -  | -  | +  | +  |
| n | - | + | + | + | - | + | - | - | - | -  | +  | +  | -  | +  | -  | +  | +  | +  | +  | -  |
| o | + | - | - | - | + | - | - | - | - | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | +  | +  |
| p | - | - | - | + | + | - | - | - | - | -  | -  | -  | -  | +  | -  | -  | -  | -  | +  | -  |
| q | - | + | - | - | + | + | - | - | - | -  | +  | +  | -  | +  | -  | +  | -  | -  | +  | +  |
| r | + | + | + | + | - | + | + | + | - | -  | -  | -  | -  | +  | -  | -  | -  | -  | +  | +  |
| s | - | - | - | - | - | + | - | + | - | +  | -  | -  | +  | +  | +  | -  | +  | -  | +  | +  |
| t | + | + | + | + | - | + | - | - | - | +  | -  | -  | +  | +  | -  | +  | -  | -  | +  | -  |

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| u | - | - | - | + | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | + | - | - | + | - |
| v | - | + | + | + | - | + | - | - | - | - | - | - | + | - | + | - | - | - | + | - |
| w | + | - | + | + | + | + | - | - | - | + | - | - | - | - | - | + | + | - | - | - |
| x | + | + | + | - | - | + | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | + | - | - | - | - | + | - |

Table (2.4.)

Table (2.4.) states teachers' responses to the (above mentioned) questionnaire. Numbers (1 - 20) refer to the teachers involved in the questionnaire (numbers are used instead of names). Letters (a - x) refer to the written tasks in which university teachers expect their students to be competent.

Teachers' responses

|   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| a | + | - | - | - | - | + | - | + | - | -  | -  | +  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  |
| b | - | + | - | - | + | + | - | + | + | +  | -  | -  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  |
| c | + | - | - | - | - | + | + | - | - | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  |
| d | - | + | - | + | + | + | + | + | + | +  | +  | -  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  |
| e | - | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | +  | +  | -  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | -  |
| f | - | - | - | - | - | + | - | + | + | +  | +  | +  | -  | +  | -  | -  | -  | +  | +  | -  |
| g | - | + | - | - | + | + | - | + | + | +  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  |
| h | + | - | + | - | + | + | + | + | + | -  | +  | +  | -  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | -  |
| i | - | - | - | + | - | + | - | - | + | -  | -  | -  | +  | +  | +  | +  | -  | +  | -  | -  |
| j | - | - | - | + | + | + | - | + | + | +  | -  | -  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | -  | -  |
| k | - | - | - | + | + | + | + | + | + | +  | -  | +  | +  | -  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  |
| l | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | +  | -  | -  | -  | -  | +  | -  | +  | -  | -  | -  |
| m | - | - | - | + | + | + | - | + | + | +  | -  | -  | -  | +  | -  | +  | +  | +  | +  | -  |
| n | - | - | - | + | + | + | - | + | + | +  | +  | -  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  |
| o | - | - | + | + | - | + | - | + | + | +  | +  | +  | -  | -  | +  | -  | -  | +  | +  | -  |
| p | - | - | + | + | + | + | - | + | + | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | +  | -  | -  | +  | +  | -  |



|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| q | - | - | + | + | + | - | - | + | + | + | - | - | + | + | + | + | - | + | - | - |
| r | - | - | + | + | + | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | + | - | - | - | - | + | - | - |
| s | - | - | + | - | - | + | - | - | - | + | - | + | + | - | - | - | + | + | - | - |
| t | - | + | - | - | + | + | + | + | + | + | - | - | + | + | + | + | - | + | + | - |
| u | + | + | - | + | + | + | + | - | + | + | - | - | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | - |
| v | - | + | - | - | + | + | - | + | + | + | - | + | + | + | + | + | - | + | + | - |
| w | - | + | + | + | + | + | + | - | + | + | - | + | + | + | - | + | + | + | + | - |
| x | + | + | + | + | + | + | - | + | + | + | + | - | + | + | + | - | - | + | + | + |

Generalising from the results presented in tables (2.3.) and (2.4.), we can conclude that there is a substantial area of overlap between students' and teachers' perceptions of need (see diagram (2.8.)). This common area is the one I am primarily interested in, since the purpose of the questionnaire was to identify an agreed range of written tasks students need to learn to perform. It suggests that university students need English to be able to narrate information they have learned. They also need to practise writing letters in English as well as filling in application forms, for these two tasks are needed in order to correspond with British/American universities. While studying at a British/American university as well as studying at a Syrian university, Syrian students have to write academic essays, reports, descriptions (of a machine, an event, etc.), as well as narrate information they have learned in English. In other words, with the exception of two tasks 'to write a short story' and 'to write instructions', all the tasks listed under this common area are needed if Syrian students are to be trained in academic writing skills.

*Writing tasks in which Syrian university students need to develop proficiency*

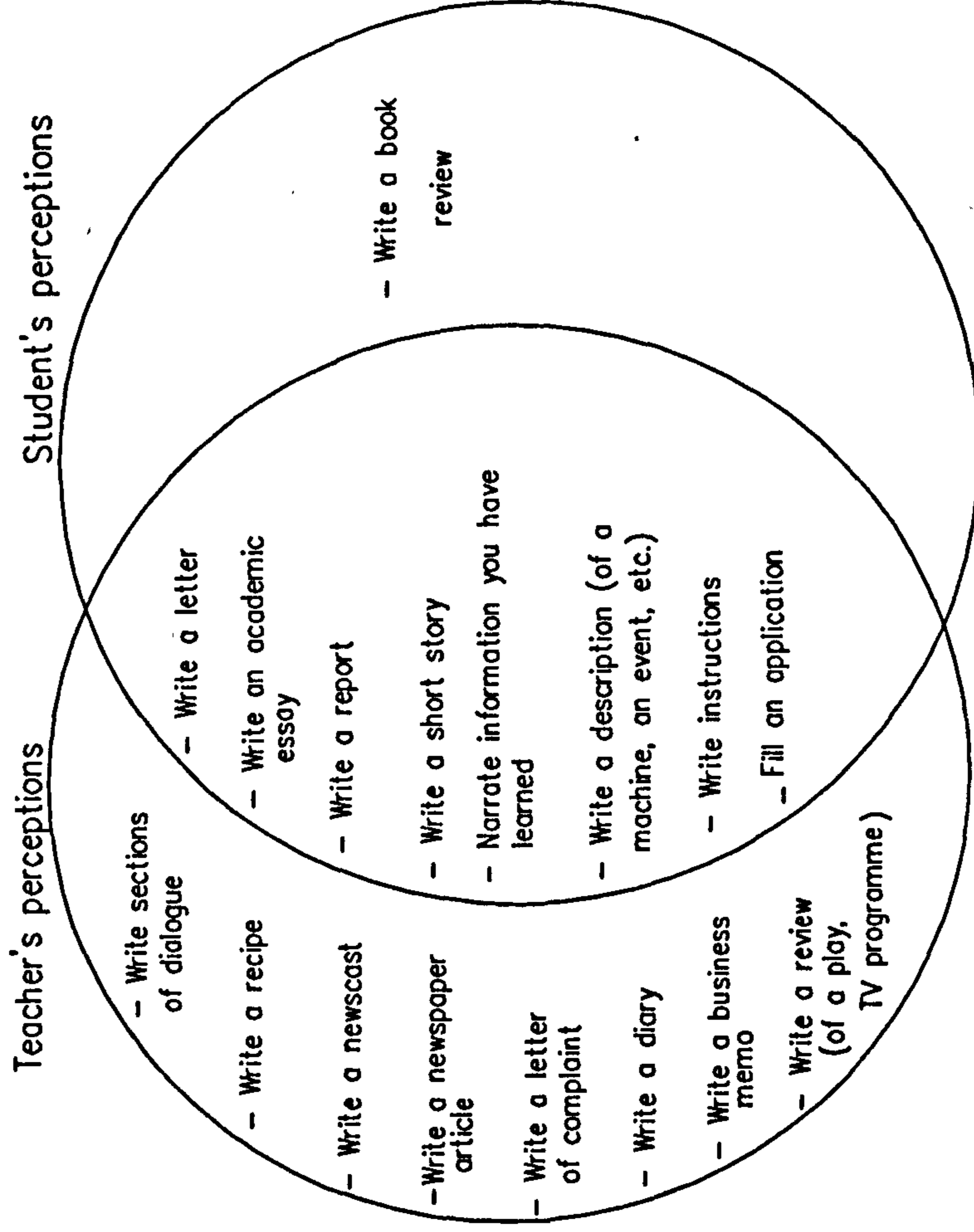


Diagram (2.8.)

Besides identifying the needs of Syrian students in relation to writing, the results presented in diagram (2.8.) are useful in shedding light on:

- (1) what written tasks need to be investigated in my case study analysed in Chapter Four, i.e. tasks adopted in my experiment should be related to identified needs. One of the purposes of this study is to identify shortcomings in current teaching methods of English composition, especially methods seeking to develop strategies for organising information beyond sentence level. Since different writing tasks require different strategies, I need to identify which writing tasks I should examine.
- (2) the purpose, as well as the structure and content of the workshops outlined in Chapter Five. These workshops are designed to meet needs identified in diagram (2.8.); and different needs require different types of workshops and activities.

#### 2.4. Conclusions

This chapter contextualises the research which follows and indicates its objectives. It has focused particularly on the following issues:

- (1) the history and status of English in Syria
- (2) the functions English fulfils in the Syrian context
- (3) the operation of the Syrian educational system
- (4) current teaching methods of English as a foreign language, with specific reference to teaching composition to Syrian university students

(5) the needs of Syrian university students and, more specifically, the writing tasks they need to learn

To investigate these issues further, Chapters Three and Four examine the effectiveness of current methods of teaching composition, and conclude that these methods are generally ineffective. In Chapter Three, for instance, an analysis of a selection of compositions written by Syrian university students shows how Syrian subjects fail to make use of the knowledge of grammatical rules they acquire from current methods of teaching. In other words, the data analysed in Chapter Three shows how current teaching methods fail to achieve the professed goals of providing students with a knowledge of English grammar that carries over into written usage. Chapter Four, in contrast, is concerned with aspects of language use acknowledged by teachers and students alike to be outside the scope of current teaching practices: strategies writers use to organise information at both sentence and paragraph level. Briefly, Chapter Four aims to find out whether current teaching methods are successful in producing competent writers of English, at the level of discourse organisation. To do this, a corpus of data from an experiment involving eleven Syrian and British students is analysed showing that the Syrian writers' failure to organise information units efficiently (judging efficiency in a technical sense based on arguments put forward by Kintsch (1974) and Sanford and Garrod (1981)) - when compared with the British writers - is due to the specific nature of current teaching materials and teaching practices. While Chapters Three and Four demonstrate in this way the shortcomings of current teaching methods of English composition in

Syrian university classes, Chapter Five focuses instead on possible initiatives: it proposes a range of activities and new ways of teaching English composition which are capable of satisfying the needs of university classes. Chapter Five suggests that there is an urgent need for a change of emphasis in the writing practices carried out in Syrian classes: instead of concentrating primarily on the teaching of grammatical rules, the communicative function of writing needs to be given more attention. Finally, Chapter Six outlines a schedule for assessing writing consistent with the new teaching approach proposed in Chapter Five, and linked to a critical description of the ways in which writing is currently assessed in Syrian universities. Chapter Six proposes the introduction of continuous feedback to assess writing in the Syrian context. This proposal of continuous feedback is based on results provided by experimental research on feedback, as well as Hillock's idea (1982) that it is ongoing comments (feedback) which bring about effective changes in the quality of students' writing, not feedback after activities have been completed.

### Notes

1. The British Council report (1984) is edited and printed by the English Teaching Information Centre for the British Council's English Language and Literature Division. This report is out of date, and it has not been superseded by other reports. This is because reports (profiles) are written for countries where there are British Council offices; and since there is not at present a British Council office in Syria, no more recent profile has been prepared.
2. A detailed description of RP can be found in the work of Daniel Jones; Outline Of English Phonetics (1918) and English Pronouncing Dictionary (1956). A corresponding description of General American (GA) can be found in John S. Kenyon: American Pronunciation. GA refers to the variety of English spoken by about 90 million people in the central and western parts of the United States and in most of Canada.
3. See Trudgill, P., and Hannah, J. , International English (London, Edward Arnold, 1982)
4. Details presented here are based on Al-Shamma's summary of the Syrian educational system (1981). See Al-Shamma, G., Native Language Acquisition And Second Language Learning, Ph.D. (Sheffield University, 1981)
5. From the academic year 1989 - 1990 onwards, foreign language teaching begins in the fifth year of primary schooling, and not the first year of preparatory schooling.
6. English For Secondary Schools (Book One) (Damascus, Al-Jadidi Press, 1967), p. 30.

7. Medicine (Book One) (New York, Macmillan, 1966), p. 2.
8. See Swales, J., and Mustafa, H., (eds.), English For Specific Purposes In The Arab World (Birmingham, The Language Studies Unit, University Of Aston In Birmingham, 1984); Strevens, P., 'Special-purpose Language Learning: A Perspective', in Linguistics And Language Learning: Surveys, edited by G. Perren (London, CILT, 1978), pp. 185 - 203; Robinson, P., English For Specific Purposes (ESP) (Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1980); and Cowan, J. R., (ed.), 'Language For Special Purposes', Studies In Language Learning, 2 (1) (1977), University Of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Current Teaching Methods: Problems In Writing

#### By University Students

#### As A Result Of The Grammar-Translation Method

### 3.0. Introduction

As has been suggested above, this thesis stresses the need for current teaching methods of English composition in Syrian university classes to be urgently reformed. It bases this recommendation on research which aims to find out:

- (1) whether current teaching methods meet the professed goal of providing students with appropriate knowledge of English grammar. (e.g. does conscious learning of grammatical rules succeed in helping Syrian university students to acquire a knowledge of English grammar capable of giving them the ability to produce grammatically acceptable sentences, i.e. does such teaching make them competent users of the grammar of English?)
- (2) whether the belief is justified that knowledge of English grammar in itself is sufficient to produce students who are competent in writing. Put differently, this question asks whether there are other, equally important, writing skills (e.g. strategies for organising information which lie beyond or outside the narrow sphere of 'grammar'), which must also be learnt if students are to become effective writers.
- (3) whether current teaching methods are successful in adopting appropriate modes of assessment.

The first of these investigative aims is the concern of this



chapter; the second question is discussed in Chapter Four; and the third is explored in Chapter Six.

As an initial descriptive stage of this project, in Chapter Two, I described the principal current method, namely, grammar-translation, used in teaching English as a foreign language in Syria. Chapter Three now moves on to investigate how efficient that method is. In other words, one of the objectives of this chapter is to find out whether current teaching methods achieve their professed goal, or result in the intended outcomes. In his definition of curriculum, Johnson (1967: 130) suggests that any curriculum is designed to achieve specific ends - it is a 'structured series of intended learning outcomes'. A curriculum, then, is concerned with ends: the performance or attainment students should reach at the end of a course (see Lewy (1977); and Taylor and Richards, (1979)). In any educational scheme, concern with the outcome goes hand in hand with other considerations such as having clear objectives, as well as an organised teaching plan. On this matter, Stern poses the question whether:

... given a certain curriculum with its own objectives and presuppositions, is the instruction of a kind that will lead to success among the students to whom the curriculum is directed?  
(1983: 441)

Curriculum evaluation, then, aims to assess the efficiency of the curriculum: the extent to which a curriculum meets its own objectives. One way of assessing the efficiency of the curriculum is to examine learners' final performance.

To investigate aspects of the efficiency of the method currently adopted in Syria, seventeen pieces of written English

homework by first year students' studying English at Damascus University are set in a context of error analysis and analysed following Corder's model (1978). Students from the Department of English Language and Literature are chosen as subjects in this case study for the following reasons:

(a) Such students specialise in English language and literature; therefore, they devote more time and effort than other students to mastering English, in the sense of speaking and writing correctly and accurately with reference to prescribed grammatical rules which govern English. They, therefore, provide the best available model of successes of the teaching system.

(b) The group of students chosen is fairly homogeneous, in having been exposed to equal amounts of English during both their school and university years. As far as pre-university stages are concerned, my subjects studied English for six years, for an average of six to eight hours per week. At university level, however, English is the medium of instruction in all subjects with the exception of Translation, Arabic language and Sakafa (national socialist education). Homogeneity of the group of students chosen in this case study and other studies is important because exposure to different inputs is likely to result in different outputs and therefore, judging the performance of different groups of learners coming from different backgrounds is not sound. In other words, causes of errors could be related to the nature of the input given and duration of exposure, hence different inputs may cause different errors.

Before examining my data, however, I situate my chosen mode of analysis in the context of current work on error identification and analysis. This is, in part, because the context of analysis always needs to be clear. But, more specifically, it is also necessary to present this context because notions of correctness and incorrectness connect with deep-seated attitudes towards language (c.f. Milroy and Milroy (1985)), and create blockages to understanding broader conceptions of linguistic performance and acquisition. My discussion, therefore, aims:

- (1) to explain my use of terms including 'errors', 'interference', 'transfer', and 'interlanguage'.
- (2) to present a background to my results, by presenting relevant existing research in the field.
- (3) to outline both the theoretical and pedagogical implications of work in this area:

3. a. When preparing teaching materials, (i) is it sufficient to focus on items predicted by contrastive analysis (c.f. Nickel and Wagner (1968))?, (ii) should contrastive analysis be replaced by another field of study, such as error analysis (c.f. Wilkins (1968))?, or (iii) should contrastive analysis be supplemented by results from other studies. (c.f. Lado (1957), Politzer (1963), and Duskova (1969))?

3. b. As regards error correction, can correction eliminate errors produced by L2 learners, as is suggested by advocates of other methods, including the traditional (discussed in Sharwood Smith (1972), Roberts (1983), and

Howatt (1984)), behaviourist (discussed in Jakobovits (1970), Diller (1970) and (1978) Holley and King (1975), Larsen-Freeman (1979)), cognitive (discussed in Rivers (1981)), and communicative (discussed in Littlewood (1981), Brumfit and Roberts (1983), Richards and Rogers (1986))? Alternatively, if it is the case that error correction cannot be effective, then how can notions such as 'comprehensible input' be employed instead (c.f. Krashen (1982)). Given that it is the traditional approach which is established in Syria, error correction is currently assumed to be the most useful tool in reducing errors in Syrian university students' performance. Thus, one of the issues at stake in my case study is how far error correction as a procedure adopted in the Syrian context can be successful in improving students' performance.

3.c. What are the causes of variation in the nature of the learners' interlanguages (ILs)? Is variation in IL the result of different teaching practices and emphases.

For reasons of focus and clarity, this chapter only examines grammatical errors. I do not, for example, analyse problems relating to cohesion and coherence, or more specifically, problems relating to information organisation at both the sentence and paragraph levels in the written work of my subjects. Nor does my analysis give a statistical account of the grammatical errors identified. Rather, my analysis examines the performance of the products of the Syrian educational system to find out how successful the system is in achieving its goals. Corder's model (1978) and Corder's

classification of errors (1973), discussed below (see pages 61 - 64), are adopted in my analysis of the Syrian compositions to trace the nature of errors made. The retention of basic grammatical errors after six years of instruction in English indicates that current methods of teaching English are ineffective.

### 3.1. Errors

Before analysing and examining errors made by my subjects, a brief definition of the notion of errors is needed to clarify my use of the term 'error'.

#### 3.1.1. Issues in error classification

'Making errors, in speech or writing, in learning a foreign language is inevitable because 'you can't learn without goofing' (Dulay and Burt, 1974: 95). But what is an error? Traditionally, an error is defined as a deviation from L2 norms. George (1972), for example, defines an error as an 'unwanted form, specifically, a form which a particular course designer or teacher does not want' (p. 2). Deviation from an L2 norm has been the focus of error analysts, who are mainly interested in comparing the learners' language with the whole of the target language (TL). But - and this can be a surprise to L2 learners - it is not only L2 learners who make errors: L1 speakers also make errors while speaking or writing their native tongue. Corder (1973) discusses three different types of mistakes which L1 speakers make:

(1) Lapses: typical lapses are

- (a) false starts: When a speaker starts an utterance, and then breaks off to change the structure, thus producing a new utterance different from the one originally planned.
- (b) slips of the tongue: when a speaker substitutes or omits some segment of an utterance (e.g. sound, word, or phrase).
- (c) syntactic blends (confusion of structures): when two, individually correct structures are confused, forming an incorrect one.

(2) Errors: two types can be distinguished

- (a) lexical errors
- (b) grammatical errors

(3) Mistakes: typical mistakes are

- (a) stylistic mistakes: These are usually the result of inappropriate choice of style.

According to Corder (1973), mistakes produce inappropriate utterances - 'some sort of error of judgement' (p. 259) - while lapses and errors result in unacceptable sentences, as Corder puts it, they 'produce unacceptable utterances' (p. 259). An acceptable utterance, according to Lyons (1968) is:

one that has been, or might be produced by a native speaker in some appropriate context and is, or would be, accepted by other native speakers as belonging to the language in question. (p. 137)

In addition to these distinctions between appropriate/inappropriate and acceptable/unacceptable utterances, Corder (1978) puts forward another distinction: between errors of competence, and errors of performance, following Chomsky (1965).

Chomsky defines competence as 'the ideal speaker/hearer's knowledge of his language', and performance as 'the actual use of language in concrete situations' (p. 4). Lapses and mistakes, accordingly, are errors of performance, because they result from the (native or non-native) speaker's failure to perform an utterance due to stress or tiredness or other factors. Mistakes are also failures in performance because the speaker could not match the language to the situation. Errors, on the other hand, are failures at the competence level because they can also be the sign of an imperfect knowledge of the code; in other words, they are the result of the application of rules by L2 learners which do not yet correspond to the L2 norm. Unlike performance errors, competence errors are systematic, and reflect either mother tongue interference (in which case, they will be interlingual errors, or errors caused by the structure of L1), or errors caused by the structure of TL (in which case, they are intralingual errors, or errors which results from faulty or partial learning of the target language, rather than from language transfer). An early reference in the literature to intralingual L2 learning errors is Corder's own example (1967: 167)

- I seed him.

Overgeneralisations such as 'seed' instead of 'saw' can be found in both L1 and L2 learning, and do not appear to relate to specific features of L1 or L2.

For convenience, Corder's description of competence and performance errors can be summed up in the following diagram:

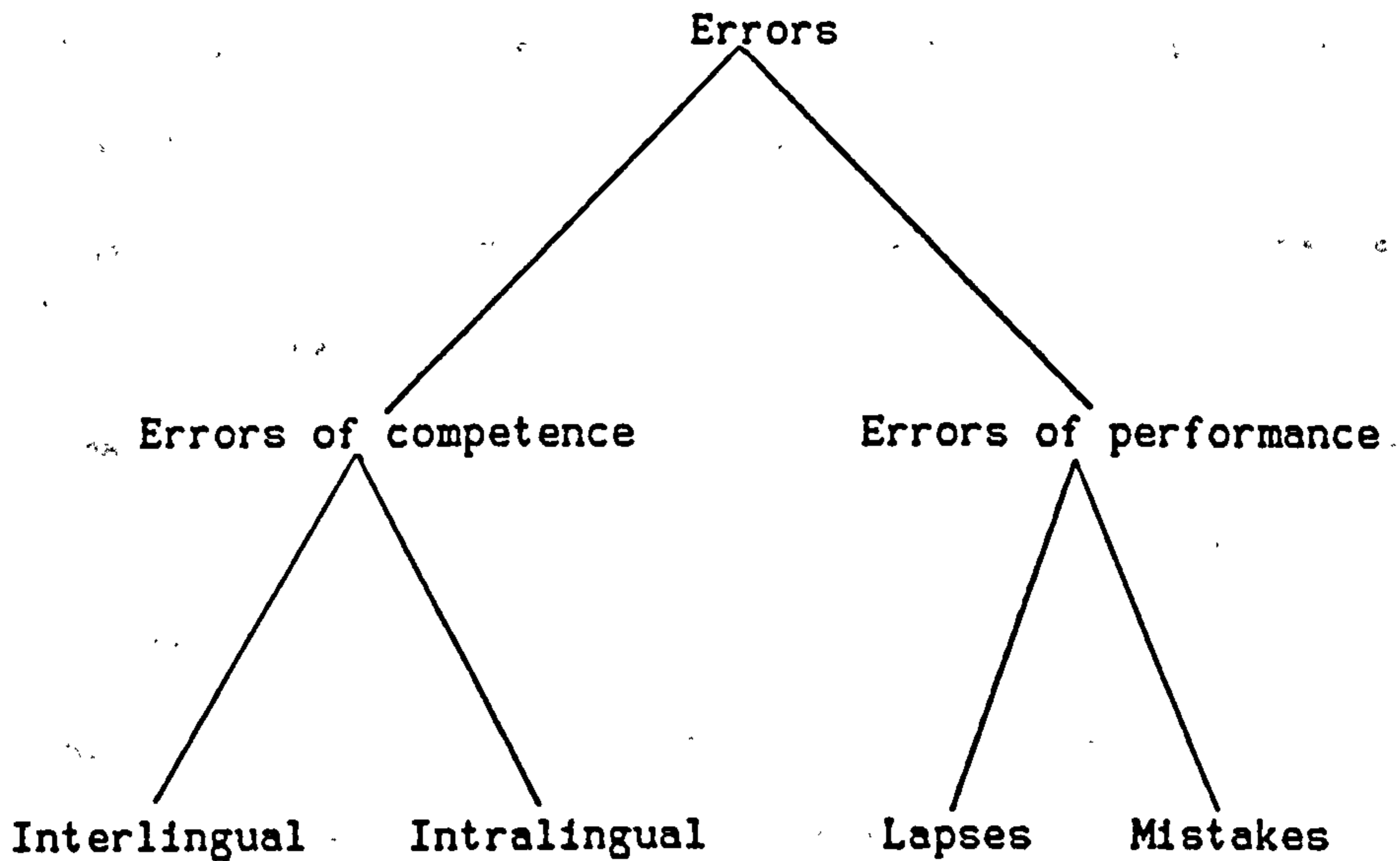


Diagram (3.1.)

Quite apart from the fact that it is in practice difficult to distinguish between them, lapses and mistakes are not relevant to the concerns of this chapter because:

- (1) my analysis of students' data examines whether Syrian university students have a grasp of a knowledge of English grammar: that is, how far the system followed succeeds in helping them to develop competence as regards English grammatical rules. From this point of view, only unacceptable utterances need to be examined, since they are the result of imperfect competence.
- (2) since the majority of 'unwanted forms' L2 learners make are not mistakes or lapses, lapses are 'of no particular significance otherwise to the language teacher' (Corder, 1974: 123). In other words, lapses are not as important as errors of competence since they do not shed light on common difficulties in language learning.



For these reasons, it is competence errors which will be the focus of my analysis. However, in the case of my Syrian subjects - as in all other cases - we only have direct access to performance, not to competence: learners' competence has to be inferred from performance. So the systematic character of errors has to be worked out by generalisation from regularities in learners' failure to master specific properties of TL.

Apart from Interlingual and Intralingual errors, the following categories (based on Corder's classification (1973)), which I will be using in my analysis of the errors made by my subjects, are:

- (1) errors of omission, where a required element is omitted. In my analysis, this type of error will be referred to as 'omitted'.
- (2) errors of addition, where an unnecessary element is added. In my analysis, this type will be referred to as 'unnecessary'.
- (3) errors of selection, where an incorrect element is selected. In my analysis this type will be referred to as 'incorrect'.
- (4) errors of misordering, where elements are used in the wrong order. In my analysis this type of error will be referred to as 'misordered'.

### 3.1.2. Approaches to errors: interpreting and correcting errors

Having described the notion of 'errors', I move on in my analysis to examine how errors are interpreted and treated by different teaching methods. In particular, I assess the influence of errors on learners' competence and performance, and the degree to which error correction can help learners to improve their

performance in TL. In other words, is error correction useful in removing both interlingual and intralingual errors?

### 3.1.2.1. Behaviourist approaches

Behaviourist psychologists (see Skinner (1957)) consider language as a particular sort of behaviour, either oral or written, initiated by a sender and received by a receiver. They see language learning as a process of imitation and reinforcement: learners attempt to copy what they hear, and by regular practice establish a set of acceptable habits in the new language. Accordingly, behaviourists emphasise the importance of manipulative practice in the language, often in a rather mechanical fashion, to ensure correctness, and construct appropriate drills to make this possible. Hence, these drills are structured in such a way that it is difficult for the student to make mistakes. Students are encouraged and expected to produce acceptable English sentences all the time. Thus, learners hear only good models in the form of lists of structures which are to be taught, without any attempt to relate them to each other, and they are encouraged to learn these structures until they become automatic. Consider the following practice<sup>2</sup>:

Look at these examples:

A: I learned Russian for a term.    A: I'm learning Chinese.

B: Why did you learn Russian?    B: How long have you been learning?

Ask questions from the following:

1. A: I'm living in Chelsea now.

B: How long \_\_\_\_\_

2. A: I moved there 5 years ago.

B: Why \_\_\_\_\_

In the above practice, students are provided with a model of a stimulus (A) and a response (a behaviour) (B). To reinforce this behaviour (b), students are presented with a series of stimuli and a clue of the initial word of the response. The initial word of the response is provided to make sure that students would produce the correct form. Behaviourists emphasise this view of correctness because they consider errors as 'the first step in forming bad habits' (Diller, 1970: 11). To pre-empt errors, behaviourists present the correct model and where correction is needed, it is immediate. Thus, language learning is regarded as a matter of memorising a set of associations between all possible sentences in the language and a corresponding set of context stimuli, of establishing automatic habits. Errors are considered a bad habit, signalling points of breakdown in the teaching and learning situation (see Diller (1970) and (1978), and Savignon (1983)).

### 3.1.2.2. Traditional approaches

Advocates of the traditional approach - the grammar-translation method (see discussion in Kelly (1969), Holley and King (1975), and Howatt (1984)) - hold the view that correcting students' errors is one of the teacher's main functions. Practitioners of this method typically focus on prescribing rules: they teach what they consider to be correct or appropriate usage of TL. Consider the following exercise<sup>3</sup>:

The Simple Past Tense is used for habitual action in the past. The Continuous Past Tense is not used with this meaning:

He was sitting in a cafe when I passed.

He sat in the cafe everyday last week.

Give the correct tense, Simple or Continuous Past in place of the verbs in brackets in the following sentences:

1. My grandmother (bake) the most delicious cakes when I was young.
2. We (fly) over the Alps when we ran into bad weather.

Based on the grammarian's views of what is best, in the above exercise, students are presented with what is considered the most correct usage. To demonstrate this usage, an example is given. Following this practice, they are asked to apply the rule to the listed examples. Since these practices are prescriptive in their approach, error correction is seen as an important task of the teacher; teachers focus on errors themselves rather than on the factors which cause them:

Teachers, as Pit Corder remarks, are more concerned with how to deal with errors than with what causes them. (Richards, 1975: 47)

This pedagogical role of the teacher as a 'director/knower', as Roberts suggested (1983: 147), is shaped by the view that it is by correcting children that parents and adults bring about language acquisition. Hence,

Foreign language teachers have been trained to correct faulty students responses quickly and consistently for grammatical or pronunciation errors assuming that correct learning will result. (Holley and King, 1975: 82)

It is, then, assumed that error correction eliminates errors produced by the L2 learner.

### 3.1.2.3. Cognitive approaches

Unlike behaviourists, advocates of a cognitive approach (see discussion in Rivers (1981)) argue that a learner must make errors as an unavoidable and necessary part of the learning process: errors are not the bad habit they were once thought to be, but rather form visible proof that learning is taking place. In other words, they are, as Corder (1967) puts it, evidence of the learners' strategies rather than signs of inhibition: they are 'a way the learner has of testing his hypotheses about the nature of the language he is learning' (Corder, 1967: 167).

Language, within this type of cognitive approach, is a matter of rule-governed behaviour. Learners usually create rules for making acceptable and appropriate utterances. These rules are stored in the mind by manipulating cognitive abilities regarding the language. Chomsky, 1965, refers to a range of cognitive factors including 'linguistic universals' which are responsible for language learning (similar in meaning to Corder's 'natural latent power', 1967). 'Linguistic universals' are made up of an inborn ability or programme used by children to acquire their native tongue, which is still available, in a degenerate form, when an adult attempts to learn a second language. Language learning is, in this perspective, a process of hypothesis formulation and refinement, as the student develops a growing competence in the target language. In other words, the learner gains cognitive control over the structures of L2, so becoming able to communicate. Consider the following practice<sup>4</sup>:

Willi Hoffman is a member of the European Parliament. He represents the Christian Democratic party, and comes from Hanover. He has three children. He speaks fluent English and French, and a little Russian. He lists his interests as history, literature and music.

Practice

Write three facts about Willi Hoffman's life.

Example

He comes from Hanover.

---

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One of the objectives of this exercise is to practise the simple present tense. Instead of presenting students with the rule of the simple present tense, or presenting a model of a stimulus and a response to lead to the correct behaviour, a piece of text is presented. Since this approach gives importance to the learner's active part in the process of using and learning language, examining this text means providing students with the ability not only to apply the grammatical rules of a language in order to form grammatically correct sentences but also to know when and where to use these sentences and to whom, i.e. presenting students with a piece of language in context would help them to deduce the rules of TL. However, errors are likely to emerge as learners make incorrect deductions about the nature of L2; they are considered normal and inevitable and they become the object of systematic study. They are seen as 'a healthy process in which the learner can be said to be testing hypotheses' (Larsen-Freeman, 1979: 219). Error correction

within this framework is, then, seen as an important task because it plays a central role in helping L2 learners to adjust the mental representations of rules.

#### 3.1.2.4. Communicative approaches

In very general terms, the cognitive/mentalistic approach, by being concerned with processes of acquisition of rule-system, has paved the way for the communicative approach (see Hymes (1972), and Coulthard (1985)). While mentalists have paid attention to the actual course which language development takes, advocates of the communicative approach have examined the contribution of the child itself in the learning process (i.e. the child's cognitive capacity to discover structure in the linguistic input around her/him), and the role of the environment in this process. Krashen's monitor theory, based on the communicative approach, makes hypotheses about the interrelation between acquisition and learning in the adult. In Krashen's model, emphasis is not placed on providing the language learner with a great deal of conscious knowledge of linguistic rules, for this knowledge may get in the way of the learners' abilities to communicate if they come to rely too much on it. Are the Syrian learners in question over-reliant on their linguistic knowledge, since they are provided with a great deal of conscious knowledge of L2 grammatical rules? Or, if not, what are the factors affecting their learning process? A discussion of Krashen's theory may provide us with some insight into the nature of language learning processes. But before discussing Krashen's theory, it is important to distinguish between language acquisition and language

learning, because the difference is crucial to an understanding of Krashen's model.

As suggested by Corder (1973: 109 - 110), there are four main differences between acquiring a mother tongue (L1) and learning a second language (L2):

- (1) language acquisition typically takes place during the period when the infant is maturing physically and mentally. Language learning, however, takes place after language acquisition is complete; that is, after the learner has mastered the mother tongue.
- (2) language learning is usually motivated by the learner's interest in communicating with people of another culture, or her/his perception of the utility of the language (L2), such as in getting a job, passing an examination, and reading L2 texts. The acquisition of a native tongue by children comes naturally and not as a result of a conscious discovery of its practical utility.
- (3) the data to which the child is exposed is not planned or logically organized. Whereas the adult learner learns carefully ordered data, the child acquires whatever samples s/he comes across.
- (4) language learning in most cases takes place under formal instruction, language acquisition does not. The child is not exposed to teaching like the L2 learner; s/he is faced with many reactions from the adults and children surrounding her/him.

The notions of language acquisition and language learning have been discussed by Lenneberg (1967) and Krashen (1982). Lenneberg



(1967) supports the distinction between acquisition and learning by drawing on several areas of research such as neurology and physiology. He reports that symptoms of traumatic aphasia ('direct, structural and local interference with neurophysiological processes of language' (p. 153)) that occur before the age of 13 are reversible, whereas those that occur after 13 are not. Hearing children of deaf parents who are exposed to a normal language environment at school age learn to speak within a year; deaf people who regain their hearing after puberty never fully master a spoken language. After puberty,

the ability for self-organization and adjustment to the physiological demands of verbal behaviour quickly declines. The brain behaves as if it had become set in its ways and primary, basic language skills not acquired by that time, except for articulation, usually remain deficient for life. (p. 158)

This suggests that child language acquisition and adult language learning are two different processes. The adult language learner is a different sort of person from the infant because there have been qualitative changes in her/his physiology and psychology at some point in his maturation process. These changes inhibit her/him from using the same learning strategies s/he used as an infant. In other words, processing strategies used by an infant to discover the system of her/his mother tongue are different from the ones used by an adult to adapt herself/himself to a new language system.

To achieve native-like performance, Krashen (1982) proposes that in L2 contexts the ability to produce language could emerge naturally by developing 'adult language acquisition'. Krashen defines 'adult language acquisition' as

a process similar, if not identical, to the way children develop ability in their first language ... In non-technical language, acquisition is 'picking up' a language. (1982: 10)

He also defines 'adult language learning' as

conscious knowledge of a second language, knowing the rules, being aware of them, and being able to talk about them. (1982: 10)

Later on he says: "'grammar' (is) a term I will use as a synonym for conscious learning ...' (1982: 89).

Krashen's theory comprises three components: the filter, the organizer, and the monitor. The filter 'refers to affective factors that screen out certain parts of learners' language environments' (Dulay et al, 1982: 46). The organizer 'subconsciously organize(s) the new language system', (Dulay et al, 1982: 46) and the monitor 'consciously processes information', (Dulay et al, 1982: 46), (see diagram (3.2.)).

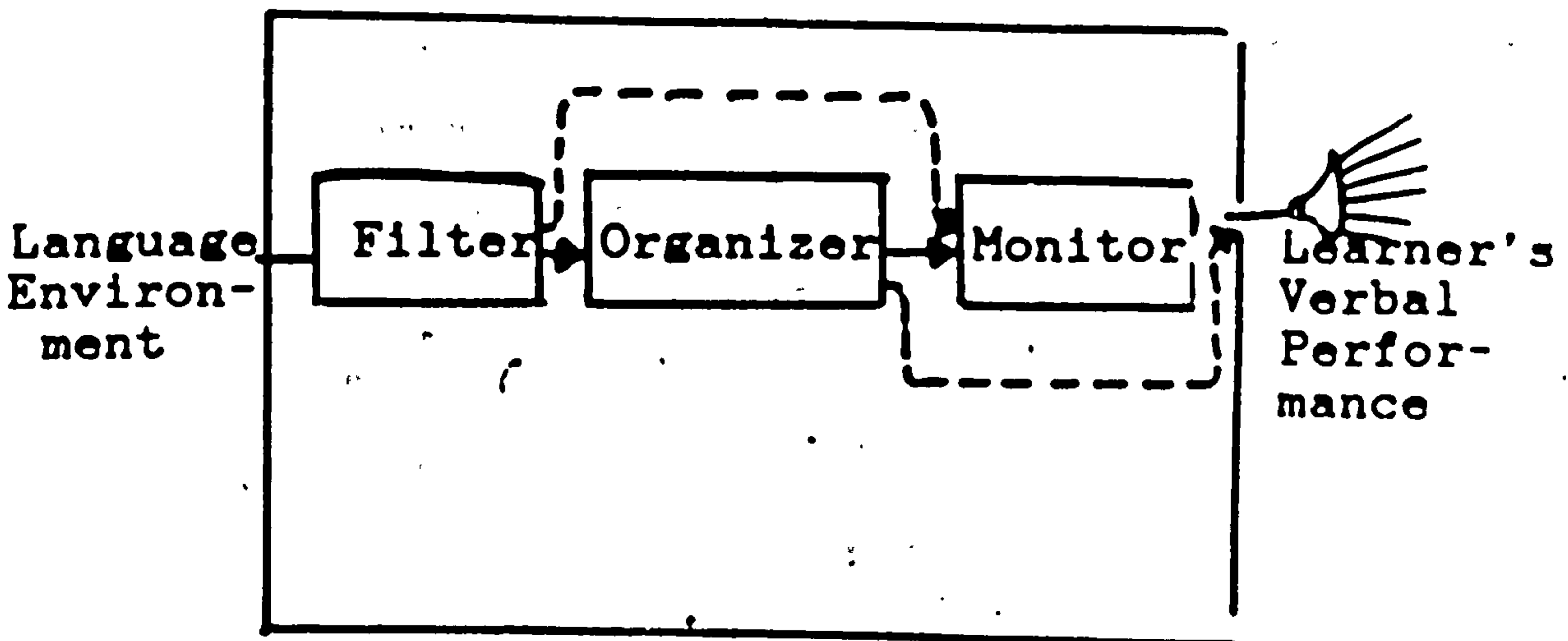


Diagram (3.2.)

(Dulay et al, 1982: 46)

The monitor model, represented in diagram (3.2.) seems to suggest that the acquisition of a second language takes place in the following conditions:

- (1) a low affective filter which would eliminate all opposition to, and resentment for, the target language.
- (2) subconscious processes - usually leading to the development of 'competence' - which would organise the L2 system.
- (3) little use of the monitor, or little use of learned rules (conscious knowledge) which would serve as a monitor or editor of utterances.

To recapitulate, Krashen's monitor theory puts forward the following claims:

- (1) that language acquisition is different from language learning.
- (2) that only language acquisition accounts for spontaneous use of the target language. Making adult L2 language acquisition happen in the classroom is achieved through activating exactly the same language acquisition device that small children have and unconsciously use in acquiring their mother tongue. This same language acquisition device will then output 'acquired competence' in the target language. It is only people who have 'acquired competence' who use a language spontaneously, fluently, and accurately.
- (3) that providing for and encouraging language acquisition rather than language learning must be the primary goal of instruction.
- (4) that of the four skills, listening and reading comprehension are the most important in promoting global language acquisition. Acquisition results from comprehension and not the other way

round because it is comprehension as a process - the ability to understand messages - and not comprehension as a product which brings about acquisition. Learners' efforts to establish a relationship between meaning and structure or learners' attempts to try to comprehend is where the value of acquisition lies. Therefore, the teacher's role is to ease, support, or regulate learners' efforts. Briefly, Krashen's input hypothesis is a strong assertion of the centrality of comprehending the intended meaning (the message a speaker/writer aims to achieve by an utterance).

The acquisition-learning distinction is also discussed by Lawler and Selinker (1971) who propose that for rule internalization one can

postulate two distinct types of cognitive structures: 1) those mechanisms that guide 'automatic language performance ... that is, performance ... where speed and spontaneity are crucial and the learner has no time to consciously apply linguistic mechanisms ... and 2) those mechanisms that guide puzzle- or problem-solving performance ... (p. 35)

Corder (1967), citing an unpublished paper by Lambert, also discusses the acquisition/learning distinction and the possibility that acquisition is available to the adult second language learner.

The monitor model considers making errors as a device used by children in the process of acquiring L1 and by learners in the process of learning L2 to test their linguistic knowledge. To improve L2 learners' performance can be achieved by presenting them with comprehensible input, i.e. it is not error correction and/or explicit teaching of rules which eliminates errors. Krashen states that

Error correction is not the basic mechanism for improving second language performance; rather, we acquire via comprehensible input, according to the theory. Since overuse of correction has such negative effects for acquisition, and since error correction is not of direct benefit to language acquisition, a safe procedure is simply to eliminate error correction entirely in *communicative-type activities* ... Improvement will come without error correction, and may even come more rapidly, since the input will 'get in', the filter will be lower, and students will be off the defensive. (1982: 76, my italics)

Error correction is not the best technique to be used in an L2 context for the following reasons:

- (1) Error correction may shift the focus of L2 learners from meaning to forms. Littlewood (1981) remarks

excessive correction will encourage learners to shift their focus from meaning to forms. (p. 91)

- (2) Being corrected or 'scrutinised' has a psychological effect on L2 learners, i.e. they can easily become anxious if

whatever they say or do is scrutinised in detail, with every shortcoming being made a focus for comment. (Littlewood, 1981: 93)

Littlewood's remarks are meant to modify the role of a teacher; instead of being the 'director', s/he can become 'a guide rather than a leader, or even the learners' peer' (Yalden, 1983: 151).

Littlewood's remarks on the effects of errors on the L2 learners' psychology as well as on their attitudes to language (concentrating on the form of the language in question more than on meaning), and Yalden's redefinition of the role of the teacher are all relevant to my case study for the following reasons:

- (1) Most obviously, one of my objectives is to investigate whether error correction of the writing of my Syrian subjects as carried

out by Syrian university teachers is useful or not.

- (2) Less directly, another objective is to find out whether error correction has the effect of making my subjects more aware of form than of meaning.
- (3) A third objective is to find out whether error correction made my subjects unduly anxious about their writing.

To sum up, there are two poles of argument. At one extreme, errors are wrong and must be avoided at all costs by controlled drilling. Since errors are a sign of the present inadequacy of teaching techniques, teachers' efforts should go into 'rewarding' correct responses and 'punishing' wrong answers. Incorrect utterances are seen as the effect of the old habits on the new habits. At the other extreme, incorrect forms are necessary, even vital, for they are to be seen as a sign that learning is taking place; and they reveal the course which learning is taking. Syrian university teachers' views of errors tend towards the first pole, in that they are not interested in the errors themselves, only in eliminating them. In other words, they are not keen to find out the reasons behind the errors; rather, they wish to make the errors disappear through correction. The main focus of this chapter is on finding out if error correction is in fact successful in eliminating errors, and on looking for the reasons or factors causing errors. Briefly, the question is: are current teaching methods and attitudes to learning and error correction in the field of grammar the cause of mistakes in other areas of performance made by Syrian university

students?

### 3.2. Making errors and learning a language

Like the notion of 'error', problematic concepts such as 'language interference', 'transfer' and 'interlanguage' need to be clarified, since I am going to refer to them in my analysis of the data collected.

#### 3.2.1. Language interference

The notion of L1 'interference' in use of L2 was developed in the 1950s and 1960s as a result of an interest in 'Contrastive Analysis'. Linguists developed contrastive analysis (CA) as an application of structural linguistics to learning and teaching. They believed that working out similarities and differences between L1 and L2 may help to explain and predict problems in L2 learning and hence contribute to the design of courses for language teaching. CA sought to help the language teacher to predict students' error and plan instructional material accordingly. Lado (1957) demonstrates that the objectives of CA are the following:

... the comparison of any two languages and cultures to discover and describe the problems that the speakers of one of the languages will have in learning the other. (p. vii)

Fries (1945) also describes the crucial role CA plays in second/foreign language learning materials' development

The most efficient materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learnt, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner. (p. 2)

CA and language interference are, then, the major concern of linguists like Lado (1957), Weinreich (1953), Kirkwood (1966), Banathy and Madarasz (1969) and Selinker (1969). All these researchers emphasise the existence of mother tongue interference in L2 learning situations, and so argue that detailed comparison of the linguistic systems (sound system or/and grammatical system) is necessary.

CA feeds into more general applications of the structural approach to language teaching, in which language teaching seeks to establish habits in L2 by minimising transfer of L1 habits into L2 teaching situations. Kirkwood (1966), for instance, concludes that

Contrastive syntactic and semantic study through translation, ..., constitutes a solid empirical basis on which to build cognitive control over the structure of a language... (p. 182).

CA believe that the major source of difficulties in L2 is interference between the native tongue and the target language. To overcome such difficulties, this view suggests that first one has to predict them, then select suitable teaching materials. Thus L1 interference can be defined as

Those instances of deviation from the norms of either language which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language, i.e. as a result of language contact. (Weinreich, 1953: 1)

In this view, if languages come into contact, L1 interference is inevitable; and so consideration of L1 interference is the central point in all the studies carried out by contrastive analysts. To avoid L1 interference in L2 teaching, working out differences between L1 and L2 has been considered important for the L2 teacher



in relation to time and energy spent in preparing materials, and in particular to overcoming areas of possible difficulty.

CA, then, is seen as being useful in the preparation of teaching material because predicting learners' errors helps in deciding what to include and/or exclude in a syllabus.

### 3.2.2. Transfer

Since L1 interference is inevitable, we need to ask what causes the mother tongue and target language to intermingle in this way? Selinker (1969: 73) distinguishes three different types of 'transfer' which are responsible for interference between L1 and L2 habits. They are:

- (1) Positive Language Transfer: This type of transfer happens whenever similar linguistic entities occur in two languages. These entities represent a kind of parallel predominance in the two languages. Such transfer is non-erroneous because it matches the linguistic entities of the two foreign languages.
- (2) Neutral Language Transfer: This type happens when there are two linguistic entities in the native language which are parallel to a similar pair in the target language, but only one of them matches that of L2. Thus one entity is erroneous, and the other is not.
- (3) Negative Language Transfer: This type occurs when one entity plays a significant role in the native language, but does not play the same role in the target language. This type of transfer is erroneous because it deviates from the standard model of L2.

Finding ways of overcoming the transfer of L1 habits into L2 is

the major concern of contrastive analysts, however, since CA focuses on the comparison of the linguistic systems of L1 and L2, the significance of the learner has been underestimated if not ignored.

As Hughes puts it

Contrastive Analysis ... has underrated the contribution of the learner, has failed to recognize fully the nature of what has to be learnt [the target language], and has not taken into account the way the L2 is presented to the learner. (1980: 3)

Similarly, Lado (1957) voices the following reservation:

The list of problems resulting from the comparison of the foreign language with the native language ... must be considered a list of hypothetical problems until final validation is achieved by checking it against the actual speech of students. (p. 72)

Since the language learner has rarely been the focus of contrastive analysis, this neglect leads to repeated failures in predicting/accounting for errors made by L2 learners. This failure is suggested by Ekmekci's study (1984). Ekmekci's analysis of the performance of a 13-year-old Turkish boy in English indicates that the errors which occurred derive from different sources; they are triggered by at least the following range of factors:

- (1) incomplete acquisition of the second language
- (2) attempts at imitating speakers of his own age
- (3) domination of the process of acquisition by the process of learning because of formal classroom instruction
- (4) personality factors such as excitement and nervousness

Ekmekci's results suggest two important conclusions:

- (a) not all errors can be predicted by contrastive analysis; since elements like personality factors are not taken into account

(b) not all errors are interference errors

These observations about CA made linguists, especially after the Georgetown Roundtable on CA in Washington in 1965, shift their focus from the teacher to the learner, increasingly recognising her/him as the active participant in the learning process.

### 3.2.3. Interlanguage and variation in interlanguage

#### 3.2.3.1. Interlanguage (IL)

Failure of the contrastive analysis hypothesis to account for all errors made by L2 learners has led to investigation of the learners' interlingual systems and to new approaches to the analysis of learners' errors. Corder (1967) suggests that a better understanding of language learning would come from a more systematic investigation of learners' errors which aims at discovering the 'built-in syllabus' of the language learner. Selinker (1972) also considers the developing learner's language as a system in its own right. He defines interlanguage systems as intermediate stages between the native language and the target language observable in the learners' language. In other words, interlanguage is

the linguistic system based on the observable output which results from a learner's attempted production of a target language norm. (Selinker, 1972: 214)

Selinker's notion of interlanguage is established on the assumption that there exist

psychological structures that are latent in the brain which are activated when one attempts to learn a second language. (1972: 212)

Accordingly, he distinguishes three types of utterances that are

produced by L2 learners in a meaningful performance situation:

- (1) utterances in the learners' native language (NL utterances),
- (2) interlanguage utterances produced by the learner (IL utterances),
- (3) target language utterances produced by native speakers of a target language (TL utterances).

IL utterances are not identical to NL utterances or TL utterances. They comprise features of both languages (L1 and L2); but they are not absolutely bound to either. In other words, IL has its own properties. Evidence for the existence of IL is most obvious in fossilizations which are:

linguistic items, rules, and subsystems which speakers of a particular NL will tend to keep in their interlanguage relative to a particular target language, no matter what the age of the learner or amount of explanation and instruction he receives in the target language. (Selinker, 1972: 215)

These forms continually appear in the learners' IL even after years of instruction in the target language.

Similar concepts to Selinker's 'interlanguage' have been introduced by Nemser (1971) and Corder (1971). Nemser calls the interlanguage phenomenon an 'approximative system', by which he means

the deviant linguistic system actually employed by the learner attempting to utilize the target language. (1971: 116)

He considers this system to be distinct from both the 'source language' (mother tongue), and the target language, and gives phonological examples of the intermediate systems developed by L2 learners. Such systems not only have typical features of their own,

but also are internally structured. Working in parallel with these ideas, Corder considers the interlingual system, or what he calls 'idiosyncratic dialect', as a unique individual dialect, typical only of that learner. Hence it has to be viewed independently from L1 and L2 because

some of the rules required to account for the dialect are not members of the set of rules of any social dialect; they are peculiar to the language of that speaker. (pp. 148 - 149)

Interest in learners' interlingual systems is justified by a concern to discover the relationship between what has been taught and the learners' actual knowledge at any given point. My examination of the performance of my Syrian subjects is actually an analysis of their IL at a certain time of their learning, i.e. it aims to discover the nature of their IL. Corder (1967) remarks that children's ill-formed utterances are considered 'as a normal childlike communication which provides evidence of the state of his linguistic development at that moment' (1967: 164). Similarly, my Syrian subjects may produce ill-formed utterances in terms of the TL. These utterances are, however, pieces of evidence of their interlingual system.

### 3.2.3.2. Variation in interlanguage

Since L2 learners' interlanguage systems are different at different stages of their learning, linguists are keen to look for explanations of the nature and causes of variation in learners' interlanguage. According to Tarone (1988), two distinct types of theories have been proposed to explain variation in interlanguage:

(a) inner processing theories

(b) sociolinguistic/discourse theories.

The first group of theories seeks to explain variation primarily as resulting from psycholinguistic processes of various kinds. The second group, on the other hand, attempts to relate variation to social and functional causes. The first group of theories includes the Monitor theory, Chomskyan models, psychological processing models and the Labovian 'attention to speech' model. All these models focus on the systematicity of language which is to be found in the mind. The second group of theories includes social psychological models such as the social psychological models of Beebe and Giles (1984) and 'function-form' model of Huebner (1985). Advocates of these sociolinguistic and discourse theories propose that the causes of interlanguage variation are the result of social factors such as the identity or role of the speaker/interlocutor, or the communicative function of the linguistic form used.

In general terms, the difference between the first and the second group of theories lies in the fact that the first group focuses mainly on underlying psychological processes to specify their nature, while the second, although not denying the existence of these processes, also takes into account the contribution of other factors such as the social and communicative function of learners' performances, i.e. it analyses observable factors to trace the causes of variation. Since I am interested in the processes of acquisition/learning of English grammatical rules, and not in how social and communicative functions of language affect the development of these processes, I propose only to present a brief

discussion of inner processing theories, and not to introduce sociolinguistic/discourse theories.

Inner processing theories are models developed to make predictions about the nature of language behaviour to explain observable patterns of IL variation. They include the following theories:

- (1) The monitor theory
- (2) Chomskyan models
- (3) Psychological processing theories
- (4) Labovian models

#### 1- The monitor theory

Krashen's monitor theory ((1981) and (1982)) outlines two completely independent systems of knowledge which make up interlanguage. They are

- (1) an implicit knowledge system: this system is usually unconsciously acquired, i.e. it consists of the unconscious knowledge of how to produce the language in communication
- (2) a metalinguistic knowledge system: this system has been consciously internalised or 'learned'. It consists of knowledge about the target language and is referred to as the 'monitor'.

Interlanguage utterances are initiated by the 'acquired' knowledge and not the 'monitor'. The monitor, however, is used to modify the output of acquired knowledge in communicative performance. The variation in interlanguage is the result of monitoring or not monitoring output. For the monitor to be used, the following conditions must hold:

- (a) availability of sufficient time for monitor use
- (b) focus of the learner's attention upon language form
- (c) ability of the learner to state the grammar rule in question.

When all three conditions are present the learner, then, may use the monitor to modify the output of her/his acquired knowledge system. In other words, the monitor only modifies utterances generated by the unconscious knowledge system. My subjects' failure to use the monitor could be related to the fact that they are over conscious of knowledge of linguistic rules (see page 125), which in turn may get in the way of learners' abilities to communicate or to produce a grammatically acceptable utterance.

## 2- Chomskyan models

Advocates of Chomskyan theories of interlanguage variation, such as Schachter, Tyson and Duffley (1976), Adjemian (1976) and Liceras (1981), argue that L2 learners' intuitions with regard to grammaticality of sentences should be used as data in the study of interlanguage. They build their theories on Chomsky's goal of linguistic research: to construct a model of the linguistic knowledge of the ideal speaker-hearer of a language (competence). Following Chomsky, they have assumed that the competence of native speakers is systematic, i.e. homogeneous and invariant. The data used to develop L2 learners' intuitions in constructing a grammar of the target language should be given primacy in the study of IL. Variation in IL is the result of performance errors and not competence errors since L2 learners' competence is systematic. Performance errors are made when the competence of L2 learners



becomes 'permeable', as Adjemian suggests (1976), i.e. the learner's IL system can be penetrated by

rules foreign to its internal systematicity, or the overgeneralization or distortion of an IL rule. (Adjemian, 1976: 308)

When placed in a situation that cannot be avoided, the learner may stretch, distort, or overgeneralise a rule from the target language (see example (19), page 104) in an attempt to produce the intended meaning; or the structures of the interlanguage may be 'invaded' by the first language.

### 3- Psychological processing theories

Psychological processing theories make use of the results of research in human information processing. Advocates of the psychological processing approach, including McLaughlin (1978) and Bialystok and Sharwood-Smith (1985), distinguish between knowledge and the processes used to implement that knowledge in communicative performance. While Krashen makes a distinction between two systems which can be used by L2 learners to process the input (the data presented to the learner), 'monitoring' and 'unconscious monitoring', McLaughlin, on the other hand, suggests that there are two processes, one of which can be activated when an L2 learner is processing the input. The two processes are: 'controlled' and 'automatic' processing which are 'based on behavioural acts, not on inner states of consciousness' (McLaughlin, 1978: 318). The distinction between controlled and automatic processes is proposed by Shiffrin and Schneider (1977), and is to be used to differentiate processes that are capacity-limited and temporary from those that

are relatively permanent and nearly always become active in response to a particular input configuration. Shiffrin and Schneider demonstrate that there are two processes a producer of a piece of discourse can use to activate concepts from memory:

(1) automatic processing: This involves the activation of certain nodes in memory every time appropriate inputs are present. This activation is a learned response, built up through the consistent mapping of the same input onto the same pattern of activation over many attempts. For this reason, it requires training and practice.

(2) controlled processing: This is not a learned response, but a temporal activation of nodes in a sequence. This activation is under attentional control of the subject; and since attention is required, only one such sequence can normally be controlled at a time without interference of other nodes. Such processing intrudes on the ability to perform simultaneously any other task that also requires a capacity of search from memory. Controlled processes are thus tightly capacity limited, and require more time for their activation.

One major difference between 'automatic processing' and 'controlled processing' is that the first is well established in long-term memory, and so activates interconnected systems of nodes. The second, however, is not kept in long-term memory, and so deals with a small number of nodes which are activated individually at the time of processing. Interlanguage variation, within the framework of the psychological processing theories, results from the use of 'controlled' and not 'automatic' processing. 'Controlled' processing

is not as efficient as 'automatic' processing, since the first requires more attention than the second because it activates only a limited set of nodes from the short term memory, which are able to carry out only local and not global processing.

The acquisition of a complex cognitive skill, such as learning a language, regardless whether it is L1 or L2, is thought to involve the gradual accumulation of automatised subskills and a constant restructuring of internalised representations as the learner achieves increasing degrees of mastery. In other words, a task such as language learning requires the integration of a number of different skills, each of which has been practised and made routine. It involves building up a set of well-learned automatic procedures so that controlled processes will be freed for new tasks. In this way, limited resources can be spread to cover a wide range of task demands. The notion of a capacity-free (automatic) process provides an explanation for improvement in performance, and the controlled/automatic processing distinction explores the degree to which the skills in question have been routinised and established in long term memory by the learner. While writing or activating concepts from memory, the learner needs to employ appropriate syntactic rules and must draw on a limited lexical system. Thus each concept requires more or less work depending on how well-learned the processes involved are. The better-learned a component skill is, the less effort and processing-time required for its execution. The execution of new skills (proposition organisation) is costly in terms of workload involved, and will occur only when other tasks and cognitive demands are minimised (such as syntactic and lexical

processing). Since automatic execution of a task such as language processing is learnable, in an L2 context, learners' failure to display their range of linguistic knowledge in an automatic way is the result of the lack of a suitably structured input, i.e. learners' failure does not stem from any physiological incompatibility. On the other hand, once the task is learned, automatic processing occurs rapidly and is difficult to suppress or alter.

Syntactic rules, and proposition strategies, are activated when a writer seeks to produce a piece of discourse. Sachs (1967) however, finds that, in the case of native speakers, recognition memory for semantic features of an utterance is superior to recognition memory for syntax. On the other hand, in an L2 context, Rossman (1981) suggests that this would not be the case for L2 learners who have not yet achieved the degree of automaticity in processing syntax that characterises native speakers. He compares the performance of native speakers with two groups of non-native speakers of English on a reading recognition test; and concludes that native speakers were able to show better recognition for semantic than for syntactic changes. Non-native speakers, however, were more able to recognise whether the form of the sentence had changed than to recognise that its meaning has altered.

Wolfe (1981) carried out a study similar to Rossman's. He tested 55 English-speaking children learning French as a second language in Californian schools. The children were asked to read a paragraph, and then shown a target sentence to identify whether it is 'the same' or 'different' from the sentence in the paragraph.

More proficient children were able to recognise more changes in meaning correctly, but made more errors in recognising changes in the language of the sentence than was the case with less proficient children. Wolfe concluded that the more proficient children had achieved a degree of automaticity with respect to processing form (syntactic rules) which had not yet been attained by the less proficient children.

In a similar way, Nation and McLaughlin (1986) found that multilingual subjects performed better than did monolingual or bilingual subjects in learning a miniature linguistic system under 'implicit' (no instruction) conditions. One explanation of these findings is that multilingual subjects are superior to other language learners in organising linguistic stimuli because of superior automatic processing skills. Thus, in the implicit-learning condition, these subjects may have excelled because they were able to employ automatic recognition skills, while at the same time being flexible enough to tolerate disruptions of automatic processing required by more controlled processing.

'Automatic' processing which corresponds to 'unconscious monitoring' activates nodes of information from the long term memory which are capable of global processing, i.e. handling more than one item at a time. Information retrieval procedures from the memory, then, can be relatively automatic or relatively controlled. If an L2 learner's retrieval processes are speedy and efficient, they are, then, 'automatic'. On the other hand, if the L2 learner's retrieval processes or access to the information of the required rules are not relatively quick, her/his processes are 'controlled'. All the above

remarks about automaticity as opposed to controllability are relevant to the present study, since one of the ways of investigating aspects of the efficiency of the method currently adopted in Syria is to find out whether my subjects are using 'controlled processing', or 'automatic processing': the controlled processing/automatic processing distinction relates to the degree to which the skills in question (syntactic processing) have been routinised and established in long term memory by L2 learners (my subjects). In other words, since current methods of teaching English as a foreign language in Syria aim to teach grammar, one would expect Syrian learners of English to achieve advanced stages of automaticity at the syntactic level. Failure to use automatic processing at the syntactic level means that writers are concentrating on one process at a time; as a result, integration between semantic and syntactic processing is not likely to take place at this stage. Besides, since recognition memory for syntactic features of an utterance is superior to recognition memory for semantic features, failure to achieve automaticity at the syntactic level would lead to under-utilisation of linking strategies, an issue which will be the focus of Chapter Four.

#### 4- 'Labovian' models

'Labovian' models of IL variation are based on Labov's work on the style-shifting<sup>6</sup> patterns of native speakers of a language, and his description of patterns observable when speakers produce language in different situations. Labov's guidelines (1970) for gathering data on style-shifting are as follows:

- (1) Style-shifting: There are no single-style speakers. Every speaker shifts linguistic variables with changes of topic and the social situation.
- (2) Attention: Styles of speakers are ranged along a continuous dimension defined by the amount of attention paid to speech.
- (3) Vernacular: In the 'vernacular' style, though a minimal amount of attention is paid to speech, regular and systematic grammatical and phonological patterns are discernible.
- (4) Formality: If a speaker is systematically observed, s/he is, as a result, put in a formal context; accordingly, s/he pays more than the minimum amount of attention to speech.
- (5) Good data: The best way to obtain good data is in a formal context, perhaps through an individual tape-recorded interview.

These lines are used to develop a theory of the cause of variation of IL. Accordingly, interlanguage variation is the result of style-shifting along this IL continuum, which is caused by variable degrees of attention which the learner pays to language form. Tarone (1983) suggests that new forms are incorporated into IL in two ways:

- (1) forms may be spontaneously produced first in the vernacular style; these forms gradually spread, over time, into more and more formal styles.
- (2) new forms appear first in the most formal style, where the learner pays attention to speech production, then, they gradually spread, over time, into less formal styles.

Labovian models as well as other models of inner processing theories

have been discussed so that they would constitute guidelines in tracing causes of variation in my learners' interlanguage.

'Errors', 'transfer', 'interference' and 'interlanguage' are discussed for two reasons: first, since my analysis of the (above mentioned) data (see page 57) refers directly to the above notions, it is essential to offer initial definitions and explanations, including my specific usage of them. Second, since one of my objectives is to identify theoretical implications of my work based on error analysis, error correction, contrastive analysis, interlanguage and variation in interlanguage, discussion of existing work in the field is necessary.

Having situated my data in the context of current work and having clarified my use of the above basic notions, I am in a position to examine the data. This is the subject matter of the following section.

### 3.3. Sample analysis of English sentences produced by Syrian speakers of Arabic

#### 3.3.1. Data collection and method of analysis

The material used for analysis consists of homework exercises written by first year students studying English at Damascus University. The Syrian compositions are analysed to test the students' knowledge of the rules of grammar. The analysis uses Corder's model (1978) represented in diagram (3.1.) (see page 63), and Corder's classification of errors (1973) (see page 64). Since my subjects have been learning English for six years (learning the



grammatical rules of English), the study aims at finding out how far learners have progressed towards this goal:

### 3.3.2. Data analysis

My analysis of data will proceed as follows: Firstly, I will identify the errors; then, I describe characteristics of the error (omission, addition, selection, or misordering); finally, I hypothesise causes for each error, and suggest whether they are interlingual or intralingual errors.

Different types of grammatical errors exist in my data. They are classified according to the following categories:

- (1) errors at the level of sentence types.
- (2) errors at the level of parts of the sentence.

#### 3.3.2.1. Errors at the level of sentence types

Errors identified in my data indicate students' failure to deal with negation and questions, i.e. errors with other types such as statements, commands and exclamations cannot be traced in the data.

#### Negation

##### Nature of errors

In English, the negative marker or stem 'not' is attached to the verb only if the verb is a modal verb, 'to be', or 'to have'. If the verb is neither of these, then 'to do' is used. In both cases, however, 'not' does not precede the verb. In Arabic, on the other hand, a statement can be negated by one of the following words (lam, ma, lan). These words usually precede the verb regardless of its

type.

In the writing of my Syrian learners, 'not' is put before the verb resulting in an incorrect form (not-v), as in example (1):

(1) he not understood a thing.

#### Explanation

The reason 'not' precedes the verb in (1) is because of the following: in Arabic lam-v is possible.

This error can be interpreted as an interference error because the producer of (1) is carrying over the Arabic rule of negation into English.

#### Questions

#### Nature of errors

The students represented in my data produced the following sentences:

- (2) What the man was accused of?
- (3) When the man was standing?
- (4) Where the writer soon was in?

Roughly speaking, they have the correct wh word, but not the correct order (misordered); in other words, the step which is not carried out is that of inverting subject and verb.

#### Explanation

In Arabic, changing a sentence from a statement into a question form can be done by simply adding a wh word to the beginning of the statement, without making any other change in the structure of the sentence. Unlike Arabic, however, English requires the addition of a wh word to a statement, as well as subject-verb inversion. Thus, the

major difference between the two systems in relation to changing a statement into a question form explains why my Syrian subjects did not make any changes to the original structure of (2), (3), and (4) (no subject verb inversion). What they did was simply to follow the Arabic rule. This error is, then, a straightforward case of interference (an interlingual error).

### 3.3.2.2. Errors at the level of parts of the sentence.

Errors discussed under this category cover errors with verbs, nouns, articles and prepositions. Other parts of the sentence such as adjectives and adverbs are not discussed because the data does not show any cases of students' failure to use them.

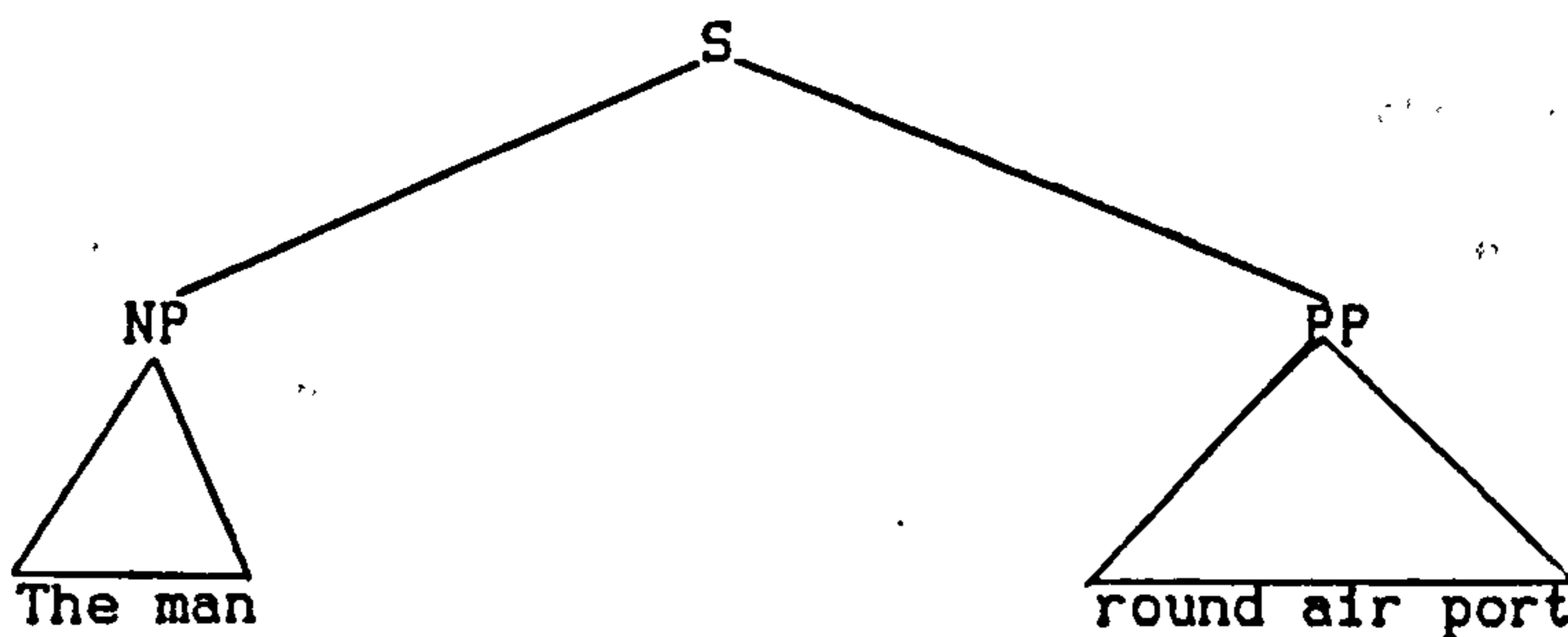
#### Verbs

##### (A) Verbless sentences

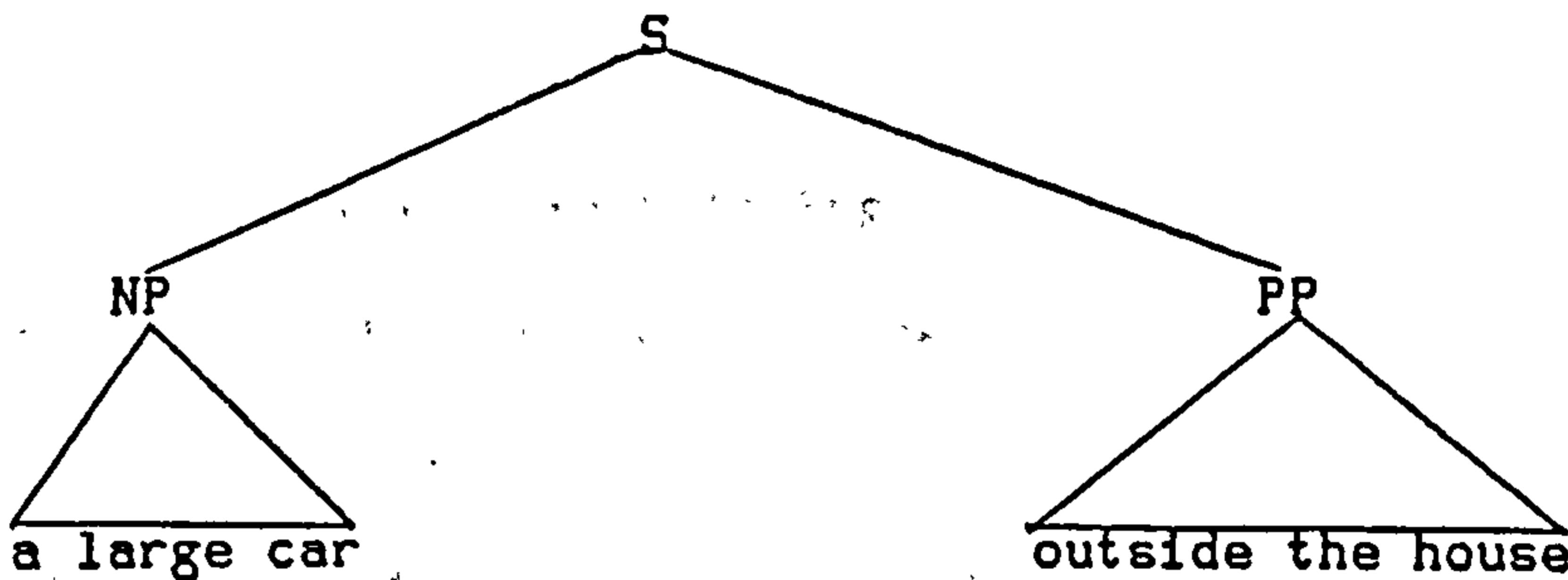
##### Nature of errors

The surface representation or realisation of both Arabic and English is significantly different. English sentences typically have SVO as their surface structure, whereas Arabic sentences can have either of two surface structures: VSO and SO, and also SVO in spoken Arabic. The SO structure is the one adopted by some Syrian learners for use in English instead of SVO (i.e. incorrect structure has been selected), as in (5) and (6):

(5) it soon began to climb and the man round airport



(6) The following Sunday at midday a large car outside the house, and we saw several strangers preparing to have a picnic in our garden.



Explanation

Learners are carrying over SO structure: ((NP NP), or (NP PP)) into English. The structure of the above sentences: NP PP is typical of Arabic but not English. Therefore, one can conclude that this type of error is an interference error.

(B) Subject verb agreement

Nature of errors

Arabic is a highly-inflected language: subject-verb agreement, in particular, is an important factor in Arabic grammar. The form of a verb will change according to number, person and tense. English, however, is not as highly inflected as Arabic. In English, if a verb

is in the past tense, the verb form will not change with a change of subject. Even in the present tense, it is only in the 3rd person (he, she, it) that the verb changes.

The group of Syrian learners in my data have a few problems with the 3rd person, as in (7) and (8):

(7) the man have

(8) complex sentence consist of

(7) and (8) are cases of failure to realise agreement between subject and verb. In other words, in (7) and (8), the agreement marker (3rd person 's') is dropped, i.e. omitted.

#### Explanation

Since subject-verb agreement in English is not as prominent as in Arabic, my Syrian subjects tend to overgeneralise the following rule:

rule (1): English verbs do not change unless the subject is in the 3rd person.

Rule (1) is overgeneralised to the degree that the exception is forgotten. This explains why in (7) and (8), there is no agreement between the subject and the verb. Briefly, this type of error is an intralingual error: the result of mixing between the 3rd person 's' and the rest of the pronouns.

(C) Finite and non-finite forms of the verb

#### Nature of errors

In English, verbs have two forms: they can be finite or non-finite. Finite verbs are those which have present or past tense and agree with the subject in terms of number and person, (e.g. 'he

studies', 'he studied').

Non-finite verbs are those elements of the verb phrase which are not affected by present or past tense, and which are also unaffected by change of subject. Non-finite forms include: (a) infinitive: e.g., 'to call', (b) ing forms: e.g., 'going', (c) ed forms: e.g., 'decided'. In examining my data, my Syrian subjects typically treat a non-finite form as a finite form, as in example (9):

Example (9)

(9a) They began to climbed

(9b) She started to unbuttoned

In (9a) and (9b), the past marker 'ed' is added to the infinitive because the sentence is in the past, i.e. all verbs (finite or non-finite) should be in the past. Adding 'ed' to the infinitive results in incorrect forms.

In English, a finite verb becomes a non-finite verb if the sentence is transformed from a statement into a question, see example (10):

Example (10)

(10a) He bought a book.

(10b) Did he buy a book?

The reason 'bought' in (10a) becomes 'buy' in (10b) is that the auxiliary 'do' carries the tense marker. But not only do my Syrian subjects treat the non-finite forms of the verb as a finite form, they also fail to transform finite forms into non-finite forms, as in example (11):

Example (11)

(11a) Did he listened..

(11b) Did the witness gave a very ..

Since (11a) and (11b) result in incorrect forms, they are, then, cases of incorrect errors.

### Explanation

Before commenting on examples (9) and (11), a summary of finite and non-finite forms in Arabic is needed, possibly to trace the nature of the error, (and so, in part, to decide whether it is an interference error).

In Arabic, all non-finite forms agree with the subject and the main verb of the sentence; their morphological forms change accordingly. Consider the following three sentences:

(12) I        want        to        go.        (English)

ʔana    ʔuriidu    ʔan    ʔa-ḡhaba.    (Arabic)

(I    want-1s    to    go)

(13) She        wants        to        go.        (English)

hia    turiidu    ʔan    ta-ḡhaba.    (Arabic)

(she    want-3fs    to    go)

(14) He        wants        to        go.        (English)

huwa    yuriidu    ʔan    ya-ḡhaba.    (Arabic)

(he    want-3ms    to    go)

While in English, the non-finite form 'to go' does not change with the change of the subject, in Arabic, appropriate prefixes (ʔa, ta, ya) are added to the non-finite form of the verb to agree with the new subject.

Moreover, in a way very different from conventions of English,

when transforming a sentence from a statement into a question in Arabic, the finite form of the verb remains finite, consider (15), and (16):

(15) ?akala at-tufaaHata.

ate-he the-apple

(He ate the apple.)

(16) ?a-?akala at-tufaaHata?

did-ate-he the-apple

(Did he eat the apple?)

The two differences between Arabic and English finite and non-finite forms expressed in (12), (13), (14), (15), and (16) are the principal clues to the interpretation of (9) and (11).

In (9) and (11), incorrect forms of non-finite and finite forms of the verb are the result of an interference error. In (9), as in (12), (13) and (14), non-finite forms agree with the subject. In (11), as in (15) and (16), finite forms are not transformed into non-finite forms, i.e. they remain finite.

(D) Verbs and the past marker 'ed'

#### Nature of errors

In both Arabic and English, it is the verb element of the sentence which carries the tense marker. Verbs can be in the past or present; their forms change accordingly. In English, to put a verb in the past can be done by adding 'ed' to its stem, as in rule (2):

rule (2): add '-ed' to the stem of the verb

However, as is well known, this rule has exceptions, such as 'go' (went), 'write' (wrote), etc. Moreover, a verb in English has three



forms: present form, past form and past participle form. My subjects have a problem with this '-ed' suffix (past marker). They either omit or drop the marker with the past and past participle forms, or overgeneralise the rule of the '-ed' suffix resulting in an incorrect form, consider (17), (18), and (19):

(17) intend (instead of intended, past tense)

(18) had not understand (understood, past participle)

(19) drived (instead of drove)

#### Explanation

If learners are not familiar with the past marker, or to be more specific are not familiar with (rule (2)), errors like the ones made in (17) and (18) are likely to occur. While (17) and (18) are the result of learners' lack of the knowledge of rule (2), (19) is the result of overgeneralising rule (2).

(E) The copula

#### Nature of errors

In English, the copula (verb 'to be') can be either a main verb or an auxiliary. Both types of copula are problematic for my Syrian subjects: in their writing the copula is often omitted ( $\emptyset$  copula), as in (20) and (21):

(20) But the witness not sure (is/was main verb in the sentence is omitted.)

(21) he examining (is/was: the auxiliary verb, which is usually used to help in forming the continuous, is omitted.)

The copula as an auxiliary verb can be used to help in forming progressive and passive aspects. The passive, for instance, is



(26) sawfa yakuunu al-Taqsu jamiilun. (future)

will the-weather beautiful

(The weather will be beautiful.)

In these cases, as the only verb in the sentence, 'kaana' is the main verb.

As an auxiliary verb, 'kaana' is used to form the progressive. In Arabic, the progressive is realised by using: conjunction (whereas, meanwhile) + kaana + main verb<sup>s</sup>. (In principle, the progressive in Arabic is not different from the progressive in English).

The passive in Arabic is realised by means of alternatives to 'kaana' ('to be'). If a sentence is transformed from active into passive, it is only the morphology of the verb which changes; this change constitutes the passive marker for the sentence. In other words, in Arabic 'kaana' ('to be') does not precede the verb as it does in English. This difference between Arabic passive and English passive is the key to the copula error in relation to the passive, as in example (22). Since 'kaana' is never used to form the passive in Arabic, and since my Syrian subjects tend to omit the verb 'to be' before the passive in English, this type of error can reasonably be assumed to be an interference error.

The progressive error in example (23), nevertheless, cannot be interpreted as an interference error, because Arabic progressive and English progressive are similar in the relevant respects. It is necessary in this case to hypothesise lack of knowledge of the rule used to form the progressive.

Finally, omission of the copula, when used as a main verb, as in examples (20) and (21), may result from the difference between Arabic and English. In English, the copula can be a main verb in all tenses, whereas in Arabic, the copula can be a main verb in all tenses with the exception of the present. This error, then, is an interference between L1 and L2. Learners are overgeneralising the fact that copula is not used with the present in Arabic.

## Nouns

Errors discussed under this category will cover errors related to nouns or noun phrases. Subject missing, for instance, represents students' failure to use a noun phrase which functions as a subject. Moreover, failure to use the plural suffix as well as relative clauses will be dealt with in this section, since the plural suffix is added to nouns, and relative clauses modify noun phrases.

### (A) Subject missing

#### Nature of errors

The subject of a sentence can be dropped in both languages. It is dropped in the imperative, e.g. Come here

My Syrian subjects drop (omit) the subject as in (27) and (28):

(27)     Asked whether he had to give the watch back or not.

(28) because it is so unusual     has already attracted a large number of visitors.

#### Explanation

Subject dropping might be an interference error (an interlingual error), or a misuse of the English subject dropping

feature (an intralingual error). However, it is more likely to be an interference error, because subject dropping is much more common in Arabic than in English.

## (B) Plural

### Nature of errors

In English, the plural suffix is 's'; in Arabic, however, it varies according to gender and number. The errors made by the Syrian learners are of two types. The first involves omission of the suffix 's' (type 1), as in (29) and (30):

(29) many interesting animal

(30) bought some victorian musical instrument

The second type involves adding the plural suffix to the noun when it is not necessary, as in (50):

(31) there seemed to be no hopes

### Explanation

(29) and (30) cannot be the result of interference between L1 and L2, since Arabic does not have a  $\emptyset$  suffix. Rather, the error appears to be a case of unfamiliarity with the 's' suffix, (hence, why the noun is left as it is). (31) appears to be the result of misusing the plural suffix: not all nouns take plural 's'. As such, the error is a case of overgeneralisation of the rule that nouns take plural 's' (i.e. an intralingual error).

(C) Relative pronouns

Nature of errors

The relative pronoun error manifests itself in different ways or different types:

- Type 1: incorrect relative pronoun, e.g.:

(32) the man when had taken our address

- Type 2: unnecessary relative pronoun, e.g.:

(33) The notice which said that camping is strictly forbidden.

- Type 3: missed (omitted) relative pronoun, e.g.:

(34) this is the wheels go round

- Type 4: unnecessary it, e.g.:

(35) the note which it was pure white

Explanation

(32) is the result of mixing up the elements 'when' and 'who' notions within the English subsystem. (33) is the result of over generalising the following rule (rule (3)):

rule (3): relative clauses are used to modify or describe a noun or a noun phrase.

(34) is the result of lack of knowledge of when to use relative pronouns to modify nouns. (35) is the result of unfamiliarity with the following rule (rule (4)):

rule (4): When a relative clause is used to describe a noun or a noun phrase, the modified noun should not be the subject of the relative clause because relative clauses are subjectless.

(32) and (33), then, are cases of intralingual errors, and (34) and (35) are cases of lack of knowledge of the rule in question.

## Articles

### Nature of errors

Errors with articles are of two types:

(a) article omitted, consider (36), (37) and (38):

(36) .. bought .. from customer

(37) There is five pound note.

(38) .. gave the house keeper old pair of trousers

(b) article unnecessary, consider (14) and (15):

(39) .. round airport a several times.

(40) .. held up an object which looked like stone but which turned out to be a gold.

### Explanation

In both English and Arabic, nouns sometimes take articles. In English, the article could be 'the, a(n), Ø', and in Arabic it could be 'al, Ø'. Rules governing the use of the 'the, a(n)', and the attachment of 'al, Ø' to the noun phrase are similar, however, they only differ in two respects:

(1) With countable indefinite nouns, English uses 'a', Arabic uses 'Ø'

(2) With countable definite nouns, English uses 'the', Arabic uses 'Ø' if there is two noun phrases following each other ('Ø' will be attached to the second noun phrase).

These two differences explain why the article was omitted in examples (36), (37) and (38). In (36) and (37), 'customer' and 'five

pound note' are countable indefinite nouns, instead of using 'a', 'Ø' is used. In (38), 'old pair of trousers' is preceded by a noun phrase, instead of using 'the', 'Ø' is used. (36), (37) and (38), then, are cases of interference (interlingual errors). In the case of type b (examples (39) and (40)), learners are misjudging nouns on the basis of countability or indefiniteness. Thus, (39) and (40) are intralingual errors.

## Prepositions

### Nature of errors

The following sentences exemplify the preposition errors:

(41) a large collection strange objects

(preposition omitted)

(42) threw a note to the platform

(preposition incorrect)

(43) spent for 29 days

(preposition unnecessary)

### Explanation

In English, prepositions are attached to noun phrases or to verb phrases as particles.

PP → P NP, e.g. on the table

VP → V Particles, e.g. catch up with, look down on, stand up for

In Arabic, prepositions are only attached to nouns, but not to verb phrases.

PP → P NP

On the other hand, both Arabic and English have complex prepositions, e.g. away from, up to, in front of.



In (41), the omitted preposition is 'of'. In Arabic, 'min', the equivalent of 'of', is used in similar ways to that of 'of', i.e. N of NP in English, N min NP in Arabic (rule (5)). If both Arabic and English share the same rule (rule (5)), this means that this error is caused by unfamiliarity with, or lack of knowledge of, the rule. Familiarity with the two systems did not facilitate language learning in this case.

With (42), my Syrian subjects are mixing up (42) with the following example, see (44):

(44) Put your ear to the wall.

In (44), 'to' is used to indicate one of the following meanings: against, upon, onto. In other words, the preposition 'to' could be used to mean 'onto'. This is possible in the case of (44), but not in the case of (41).

With (43), my Syrian subjects are mixing up (43) with the following example, see (45):

(45) I am going away for 29 days .

While 'go away --- sometime' needs a preposition, 'spend sometime' does not. It seems, then, that my subjects are carrying over the rule governing the use of for to 'spend sometime'.

To sum up, (41) is a case of unfamiliarity with the rule, (42) and (43) are cases of an intralingual error.

### 3.3.2.3. Summary of results

The characteristics of the errors outlined above fall into three types:

(1) errors resulting from interference between L1 and L2 (interlingual errors).

(2) errors resulting from mixing up functional items in L2, or overgeneralising some rules in L2 (intralingual errors).

(3) errors resulting from unfamiliarity with grammatical rules.

Since this type of error is not the result of language transfer, it can also be considered as an intralingual error (see page 62, where a discussion of both interlingual and intralingual errors is provided. Unlike an interlingual error, an intralingual error does not result from language transfer).

What my discussion of errors made by my Syrian subjects appears to show is that differences between Arabic and English morphology inhibit language learning in some cases: using unnecessary inflected forms as in (9), or dropping inflection as in (7). In the case of 3rd person 's', though Arabic is a highly inflected language, 3rd person 's' is nevertheless dropped by some of my subjects, (see pages 99 - 100): this suggests that similarity between the two systems does not necessarily facilitate language learning. In the case of finite and non-finite forms of the verb, firstly the unaffixed stem of the verb was treated as a finite form, and then finite forms were not transformed into non-finite forms when needed (see pages 100 - 103). In this case, it seems that the highly inflected nature of Arabic morphology results in cases of carry-over of the inflected nature of Arabic affixed forms. In both these cases relating to 3rd person 's', then, and to finite and non-finite forms of the verb, differences between English and Arabic morphology impede language learning.

### 3.3.3. Perspectives on problems in writing by Syrian students from existing work in the field

Unlike Mukattash's and Kharma's studies, which have shown that the difficulties Jordanian and Kuwaiti speakers of Arabic face are the result of mother tongue interference, my own investigation suggests that errors made by my Syrian speakers of Arabic do not result only from mother tongue interference; other factors (like mixing up functional items in L2, and overgeneralising or misapplying L2 rules) are also the cause of repeated errors.

To explain this difference between my study and others, it is necessary to look at existing work slightly more closely. Mukattash (1978) examined syntactic and morphological difficulties faced by Jordanian university students in writing. Difficulties were mainly manifested in articles, prepositions and verbs, all apparently the result of L1 interference. 23.5% of the overall number of errors (which were analysed according to his own intuition and knowledge of English and Arabic) were found to be cases of L1 interference. By way of conclusion, Mukattash indicates the frequency and percentage of each of twelve groups of errors made by both arts and science students in table (3.3.)<sup>a</sup>:

Table (3.3.)

| Type of error          | Number  |      |       | Per cent total |
|------------------------|---------|------|-------|----------------|
|                        | science | arts | total |                |
| 1. Verbals             | 166     | 243  | 409   | 29             |
| 2. Articles            | 127     | 179  | 306   | 21.7           |
| 3. Nominals            | 90      | 138  | 228   | 16.2           |
| 4. Prepositions        | 104     | 107  | 211   | 15.0           |
| 5. Relatives           | 22      | 29   | 51    | 3.6            |
| 6. Adjectivals         | 23      | 15   | 38    | 2.7            |
| 7. Pronouns            | 14      | 24   | 38    | 2.7            |
| 8. Sentence Connectors | 17      | 20   | 37    | 2.6            |
| 9. Quantifiers         | 12      | 17   | 29    | 2.1            |
| 10. Adverbs            | 16      | 13   | 29    | 2.0            |
| 11. Structure          | 8       | 10   | 18    | 1.2            |
| 12. Modals             | 12      | 5    | 17    | 1.2            |
| Total                  | 611     | 800  | 1411  | 100%           |

Investigating similar data, Kharma (1981) conducted a study of college students from the Department of English Language and Literature in Kuwait. According to his findings, students seemed to have difficulty in the use of the definite article with generic nouns, and in noun phrases with no article. This difficulty, according to Kharma's study, is the result of mother tongue interference. Kharma's subjects were asked to fill a forty slot questionnaire using either: 'a', 'an', 'the', or 'no article' (slot-filling is a type of a drill used to practice some aspects of grammar, in this case, the article). The answers were then analysed according to a comparative study of English and Arabic use of articles. A summary of Kharma's results is given in table (3.4.)<sup>9</sup>:

Table (3.4.)

| Item No. | Correct Answer | Kind of mistake and No. of students making it |    |     |    |             |      |
|----------|----------------|---|----|-----|----|-------------|------|
|          |                | a   | an | the | -  | total wrong | %    |
| 1        | -              | 13  | 0  | 21  | -  | 34          | 26.6 |
| 2        | -              | 110   | 0  | 7   | -  | 117         | 91.4 |
| 3        | the            | 0   | 0  | -   | 1  | 1           | 0.8  |
| 4        | -              | 14  | 2  | 25  | -  | 41          | 32.0 |
| 5        | a              | -   | 0  | 18  | 31 | 49          | 38.3 |
| 6        | -              | 30  | 0  | 9   | -  | 39          | 30.5 |
| 7        | a              | -   | 1  | 2   | 8  | 11          | 8.6  |
| 8        | a              | -   | 1  | 6   | 4  | 11          | 8.6  |
| 9        | the            | 0   | 3  | -   | 4  | 7           | 5.5  |
| 10       | -              | 1   | 0  | 30  | -  | 31          | 24.2 |
| 11       | -              | 1   | 7  | 73  | -  | 81          | 63.3 |
| 12       | -              | 0   | 16 | 18  | -  | 34          | 26.6 |
| 13       | the            | 53  | 0  | -   | 0  | 53          | 41.4 |
| 14       | the            | 2   | 0  | -   | 2  | 4           | 3.1  |
| 15       | a              | -   | 0  | 74  | 3  | 77          | 60.2 |
| 16       | -              | 2   | 0  | 18  | -  | 20          | 15.6 |
| 17       | -              | 1   | 0  | 23  | -  | 24          | 18.8 |
| 18       | -              | 0   | 0  | 48  | -  | 48          | 37.5 |
| 19       | the            | 8   | 0  | -   | 1  | 9           | 7.0  |
| 20       | a              | -   | 0  | 18  | 13 | 31          | 24.2 |
| 21       | -              | 3   | 0  | 1   | -  | 4           | 3.1  |
| 22       | the            | 1   | 0  | -   | 15 | 16          | 12.5 |
| 23       | the            | 0   | 0  | -   | 2  | 2           | 1.6  |
| 24       | the            | 1   | 26 | -   | 3  | 30          | 23.4 |
| 25       | -              | 2   | 0  | 19  | -  | 21          | 16.4 |
| 26       | a              | -   | 0  | 46  | 42 | 88          | 68.8 |
| 27       | -              | 1   | 31 | 1   | -  | 33          | 25.8 |
| 28       | a              | -   | 1  | 12  | 18 | 31          | 24.2 |
| 29       | -              | 4   | 19 | 14  | -  | 37          | 28.9 |
| 30       | -              | 1   | 8  | 12  | -  | 21          | 16.4 |
| 31       | -              | 2   | 0  | 25  | -  | 27          | 21.1 |
| 32       | -              | 0   | 0  | 25  | -  | 25          | 19.5 |
| 33       | the            | 1   | 0  | -   | 8  | 9           | 7.0  |
| 34       | the            | 3   | 0  | -   | 44 | 47          | 36.7 |
| 35       | -              | 25  | 1  | 26  | -  | 52          | 40.6 |
| 36       | a              | -   | 0  | 5   | 8  | 13          | 10.2 |
| 37       | the            | 0   | 24 | -   | 2  | 26          | 20.3 |
| 38       | a              | -   | 0  | 43  | 50 | 93          | 72.7 |
| 39       | a              | 104   | 0  | 9   | -  | 113         | 88.3 |
| 40       | a              | -   | 0  | 73  | 7  | 80          | 62.5 |

The problem Kharma's subjects have as regards use of articles manifests itself in three different forms:

(1) Problems with 'a/an'

Item no. (40), which should be an 'a/an' (see table (3.4.)), seems to be problematic to Kharma's subjects because most errors are made through using 'the' instead of 'a/an'. One explanation of this problem is that Arabic usually requires the definite article even when non-count words are used, e.g.: 'iron' is 'al-hadid', 'sugar' is 'al-sukkar' (al: is the equivalent of 'the').

(2) Problems with 'the'

In items (3), (9), (24), and (37) 'a/an' or zero article is used instead of 'the'. The reason Kharma's subjects had 'a/an' or zero article instead of 'the' is that the 'of' phrase (which is the equivalent to the genitive or 'idaafa' in Arabic) usually requires the first element of the genitive to be indefinite, with no article. Arabic Indefiniteness (no article) seems to be equated with English indefiniteness (zero article, or 'a/an').

(3) Problems with no article

Where English employs no article with non-count nouns and plurals used generically, Arabic requires the definite article. This explains why most of no-article errors (where zero forms are required) were committed by the use of 'the' instead of zero article.

A comparison of Mukattash's and Kharma's results with my own suggests that Mukattash's subjects' difficulty in dealing with articles and prepositions is explained on the basis of mother tongue interference. My subjects' difficulty in using articles and prepositions, by contrast, is not only explained on the basis of interference between L1 and L2. For instance, article errors can be

interpreted as the result of any of the following causes:

- (1) interference between L1 and L2
- (2) mixing up countability and indefiniteness in L2

Preposition errors are the result of:

- (1) unfamiliarity with the rule in L2
- (2) mixing up different types of prepositions in L2

Analogously, Kharma's subjects' errors seemed to be different in nature from my subjects' errors. Kharma's subjects typically had the definite article 'the' instead of no article. My subjects, however, had 'a' instead of no article/zero article, as in (39) and (40). While Kharma explained this error as a result of interference between L1 and L2, I interpreted the error as a result of confusion between countability and indefiniteness in L2.

Clearly enough, Kharma's and Mukattash's results differ from mine in spite of the fact that their subjects, like mine, are native speakers of Arabic. In other words, these results seem to indicate that there is a variation in the nature of my subjects' interlanguage and Kharma's and Mukattash's subjects. As suggested earlier (see pages 88 - 93) variation in the nature of IL is due to differences in learners' stages of development, i.e. achieving different stages of automaticity. This view is supported by Dulay and Burt's study (1972) who suggest that learners from different backgrounds seem to go through similar developmental processes in second language acquisition. For instance, they find that data from Spanish-speaking children who were learning English indicate that the majority of errors were developmental in nature, i.e. most errors were seen to be of the type that monolingual children make

when they are acquiring English. This led them to conclude that second language learning was like first language acquisition in that both processes involved possibly universal linguistic operations. Besides, like first language acquisition, interlanguage evolves over time as learners employ various internal strategies to make sense of the input and to control their own output (i.e. it reflects the learner's attempted production of the target language norm). This suggests that the nature of IL is different at different stages of learning - following the view that interlanguage means the learner's system at a single point in time. This last statement partly explains the differences in my results, and Kharma's and Mukattash's results. While my subjects had six years of instruction in English, Kharma's subjects and Mukattash's subjects had eight years of instruction in English. Differences in results reflect different stages of learning, which is due to learners' differences in exposure to the target language. Most important in explaining the differences in the results, however, is the specific characteristics of current teaching practices. While in the Syrian context focus is on grammar - since it is the traditional approach which is followed in the teaching of English - in the Kuwaiti and the Jordanian context emphasis is placed on grammar as well as communication. Though Kharma and Mukattash make no reference to the nature of teaching practices followed in Kuwait and Jordan, there is evidence that methods of teaching have been modified, i.e. communicative approaches to language teaching have been adopted. In the interview with Jim Auty (Middle East Education's correspondent in Amman) (1982), Jordan's Education Minister, Dr Al-Tell states that:



As the result of making the development of quality our goal and making our new administrative arrangements to enable us to concentrate on policy and planning, we are beginning to think that we cannot solve our problems by conventional means. We have to try new approaches.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, in his report, Hines (1980) focuses on the courses in the application of the English language to specific disciplines, run by Kuwait University. The basis of these courses is that

... language learning should be more than just the memorisation of rules; it should also involve their practical application.<sup>11</sup>

Hines's and Auty's reports indicate that both Kuwait and Jordan have been pressing ahead with rapid educational expansion to make teaching more effective. In other words, these reports suggest that Kharma's and Mukattash's subjects have been presented with an input different from the one my subjects have been exposed to. Being exposed to different inputs result in different outputs, an issue put forward by Cooper, Olshtain, Tucker and Waterbury. In their study (1979), Cooper, Olshtain, Tucker and Waterbury investigate the acquisition of five complex English syntactic structures by Egyptian and Israeli adult learners, adopting d'Anglejan and Tucker's methodology (1975) to compare the performance of their subjects with d'Anglejan and Tucker's French Canadian subjects. Cooper, Olshtain, Tucker and Waterbury conclude that their Egyptian and Israeli subjects

not only performed similarly to one another but also to the two French Canadian groups previously studied by d'Anglejan and Tucker. (p. 272)

Being presented with the same input, it seems different language speakers (Arabic, Hebrew, and French speakers) perform very

similarly in L2 classrooms.

Cooper, Olshtain, Tucker and Waterbury' study seem to suggest that it is the input (different inputs result in different outputs) and the amount of exposure that result in variation in IL - differences in results between my case study and Kharma's and Mukattash's study. In other words, it is not always appropriate to reduce explanations of learner errors to learners' background (the fact that learners speak the same native language or different languages is irrelevant), and to interference - even where many local errors can be traced to differences between L1 and L2.

### 3.4. Conclusions

#### 3.4.1. Theoretical implications

##### 3.4.1.1. Contrastive analysis and error analysis

If mother tongue interference is not the only factor behind difficulties in L2, as my results suggest, then results provided by contrastive studies, on the strength of observed differences between two systems, are not sufficient to trace all aspects of errors in second language acquisition. Factors like confusion between functional items in L2 identified by error analysis (as in example (19)) cannot be predicted by contrastive analysis. Mixing between 'drove' and other past forms such as 'talked' follows from the fact that not all verbs in English have the 'ed' past marker. Observations about intralingual errors such as these in the writing of my group of Syrian students correspond to the results in Duskova's study (1969), for Czech learners

confusion of the past participle and the infinitive is probably due to the fact that in

some verbal forms the auxiliary is followed by the past participle (in the perfect tense and the conditional), which may lead to doubt as to which form to use. The same applies to confusion of the present and the past participle. (p. 21)

Intralingual errors are, then, the result of mixing up the other terms of the English subsystem in question. Moreover, intralingual errors take place in both L1 and L2 contexts. On this issue Buteau (1970) comments that

since all six items involved functional relationships that needed to be identified by native French speakers as well as others, before a correct choice of form could be made, it can be inferred that the delineation of such relationships is a more important factor of learning difficulty than mother tongue interference. (p. 138)

Learning difficulty, then, may constitute a problem to both L1 and L2 learners; and failure to recognise functional relationships may in many cases be traced back to lack of understanding of functional relationships within the French sentence. Since 'function' has to be identified by native French speakers as well as by second language learners of French, it is reasonable to infer that the delineation of such relations is the significant learning difficulty, rather than mother tongue interference.

On the one hand, CA fails to predict specific errors which do occur; on the other hand, factors like agreement between subject and verb, which CA predicts to be relatively non-problematic to Syrian learners of English, also occur (see pages 99 - 100). Since Arabic morphology is highly inflectional, inflection in English, namely 3rd person 's', is not expected to be problematic. In the case of 3rd person 's', nevertheless, the 's' is dropped by my Syrian subjects.

3rd person 's' singular inflection, however, is a persistent problem not only for Syrian learners of English, but also for many foreign learners with different linguistic backgrounds (Duskova, 1969: 32; Richards, 1974: 174; Richards and Sampson, 1974: 5). Dropping 3rd person 's' is a result of confusion between 3rd person and other pronouns. Unlike the rest of the person forms, 3rd person 's' is the only person which requires agreement with the verb. Foreign language learners tend to generalise from the usual absence of agreement in English, since all persons with the exception of the 3rd person singular do not vary with the subject.

In the same way, error analysis is useful to the contrastive analyst in recognising factors which inhibit language learning; contrastive analysis is a useful guide to the error analyst in predicting elements which could help her/him to trace the cause of errors. The negation error in my case study is the result of interference between Arabic (L1) and English (L2), as in example (1). In (1), the auxiliary 'do' is omitted because the auxiliary 'do' does not exist in Arabic. The fact that auxiliary 'do' does not exist in Arabic, if predicted by contrastive analyst, is of a great value; it helps in identifying the cause of the error. For this reason both error analysis and contrastive analysis have a contribution to make in helping analysts understand second language acquisition; each needs to be supplemented by results from the other.

#### 3.4.1.2. Error correction

In section 3.1.2., I argued that there are two different kinds of attitude to error correction. The first attitude, put forward by advocates of the traditional, behaviourist and cognitive approach to language teaching, holds that error correction is essential in an L2 teaching situation to eliminate errors and improve students' output. The second view, put forward by Krashen, proposes that error correction is not effective, and comprehensible input must be used instead to reduce errors. My Syrian subjects have been brought up in a situation where it is believed that error correction is necessary to produce better results; they have been exposed to English for six years during which time they have always been corrected.

My work offers a preliminary answer to the question whether Syrian teachers' attitudes to error correction do lead to a practice which genuinely improves the output of Syrian university students by reducing errors. My results suggest that my subjects continue to produce basic errors which should have disappeared as a result of the error correction process. If errors have not disappeared after lengthy period of correction, therefore, it seems justified to conclude that - unless we hypothesise an extremely unlikely general inability of Syrian students to learn - error correction, as currently carried out by Syrian teachers, is not effective as a teaching strategy. This conclusion reinforces the claim presented in the monitor model about error correction: that error correction should be discouraged, because correcting children does not have a significant influence on their language acquisition. Hence, correcting L2 learners does not lead to better acquisition of the

target language.

Besides the fact that error correction fails to produce better results, subjecting students to criticism and correction all the time can have other indirect negative results, e.g. it can make them over conscious of the scope and limits of their linguistic knowledge. Being over conscious of knowledge of linguistic rules may get in the way of learners' abilities to communicate or to produce a grammatically acceptable piece of discourse, since they concentrate too much on producing utterances which will meet with the teacher's approval. Moreover, if too much stress is placed on grammatical rules, this emphasis itself can mislead learners by making them believe that the form is more important than the communicative function of the utterance. In other words, if what matters above all is the grammaticality of one's text, then the communicative function of the utterance comes in second place: communicative value is subordinated to a narrow conception of structural correctness. Thus, providing L2 learners with a great deal of conscious knowledge of L2 grammatical rules by correcting them all the time (as Syrian university teachers typically do), is not only ineffective but may also have the negative effect of directing students in an inappropriate direction, by misleading students into believing that the grammaticality of one's writing is more important than the communicative value of the text.

#### 3.4.1.3. Interlanguage and variation in interlanguage

In my analysis (see section 3.3.2.), I described the characteristics of errors repeatedly made by my Syrian subjects. This description enabled me to form an insight into the nature of their ILs, i.e. their IL tends to differ radically from the TL because their grammatical competence in English displays serious errors, such as errors with the plural, article, agreement (3rd person 's') and so on.

The fact that the ILs of my Syrian subjects differ from the TL after being exposed to English for six years suggests that their skills in employing syntactic rules are not yet routinised, i.e. they have not become automatic. In other words, my Syrian subjects appear still to be using 'controlled' rather than 'automatic' processing to process English syntax, which I suggest is a result of the way they are taught (see page 91, failure to achieve automaticity stems from lack of a suitably structured input). My group of learners are grammar-oriented. But being provided with a great deal of conscious knowledge of L2 grammatical rules, as I have indicated, is not effective; on the contrary, conscious learning of linguistic rules may get in the way of the learners' abilities to develop 'automatic' processing. Principally, my Syrian subjects are still using 'controlled' processing because they are presented with drills to practise grammatical rules. The drills usually involve making a response to a stimulus (the grammar rule); but stimuli and responses, as it seems, do not achieve the result the Syrian educational system aims for (that of producing competent users of the English language, i.e. users who speak and write fluently,

confidently, and correctly). Since my Syrian subjects are still using 'controlled' processing and not 'automatic' processing, this means that the 'controlled' syntactic processing is taking more time, because 'controlled' processing focuses on one process at a time. Failure to use automatic processing also means that integration between semantic and syntactic processing, and between previous syntactic and current syntactic processing, is unlikely to take place at this stage. Lack of integration between previous and current syntactic processing results in failure to achieve a degree of automaticity in processing English syntax, which in turn results in some basic errors, see section 3.3.2.

#### 3.4.2. Pedagogical implications

Since students are, at least to some degree, the product of a specific teaching system, their failure to acquire a foreign language correlates with the nature of the input presented to them: different inputs do result in different outcomes. My Syrian subjects consistently have a specific range of basic grammatical errors. One can ask, therefore, what is it about English language teaching methods followed in Syria that creates obstacles to Syrian university students? Generally, to recapitulate, it can be said that teaching materials and teaching practices followed in Syria are grammar oriented. Yet they:

- (a) give insufficient attention to grammar. Grammar lessons which teachers are bound to by the school programme often focus on definitions and identifications of grammatical terminology. In other words, the focus of grammar lessons is not on how



grammatical structures are realised in different contexts. For instance, instead of showing them how some aspects of the grammar are used in different situations, teachers spend time familiarising students with terms like countable and uncountable, definite and indefinite, active and passive, defining and non-defining clauses, etc. Consequently, students concentrate on paradigmatic relations more than syntagmatic relations among linguistic units.

(b) teach students grammar by knowing about it and not by using it. Grammar is taught separately from the rest of the curriculum; it is considered as a separate subject. English books are divided into two parts: texts and grammar. Under grammar, one finds explanations of rules followed by exercises. The exercises are meant narrowly to practise the rule and not to show different usages of grammatical forms. The mechanical drilling of structures in isolation is undesirable because it has negative results; students do not get the structure correct outside the grammar lesson. In other words, learnt grammatical knowledge is not yet routinised because of failure to transfer it into contexts other than the classroom.

Briefly, the attitude of current teaching methods of English to language learning is not compatible with Krashen's view on 'acquisition' (1982), outlined previously (see pages 66 - 70). Teaching grammar has not resulted in 'language acquisition' or 'automaticity of nodes processing' (Shiffrin and Schneider (1977)), i.e. it fails to activate the same language acquisition device that small children have and unconsciously use in acquiring their mother

tongue.

Though the programme emphasises the importance of grammatical rules, my findings suggest that the cause of some errors is still either lack of knowledge of the rule or misapplication of the rule, see examples (29) and (30). Errors, then, are not always explained in terms of mother tongue interference or interference between items in L2. They can be due to lack of learning, as Carroll (1968) has proposed

I have been assuming that positive and negative transfer phenomena in learning a second language are a reality. We should in fact ask the question whether transfer phenomena are not simply artifacts of particular training methods or rather the absence of suitable training methods. Many examples of interference seem to be the result of what we may call unguided imitative behavior, or of untutored responding in terms of prior learning. (p. 339)

Lack of learning can be attributed to strategies of teaching and learning; and if the manner in which it is presented to the learner is defective, then it is likely to be impossible for the learner to take them in. Providing grammatical input made up of abstract examples (examples out of context) is, then, not producing the results the system aims at, and hence not meeting the students' needs, especially those needs identified in Chapter Two (see page 49).

To sum up, it is possible to conclude from my case study that:

- (1) Error analysis and contrastive analysis need to supplement each other's results.
- (2) Providing L2 learners with a great deal of conscious knowledge of L2 grammatical rules, and correcting them repeatedly, is not

a particularly effective teaching strategy.

- (3) Error correction can be ineffective, since it is not always successful in eliminating errors in students' performances.
- (4) Variation in the nature of ILs of different groups of learners is due to learners' differences in exposure to the target language, as well as differences in the nature of the input.
- (5) Current methods of teaching English in Syrian universities are not effective because the system fails to achieve its objectives: namely, producing competent users of English grammatical rules.

In this chapter, I have tried to show areas in which the programme followed in teaching English in Syrian universities is ineffective. I have suggested that the system fails to achieve its objectives because my Syrian subjects - the products of this system - retain basic grammatical errors which are the result of interference between L1 (Arabic) and L2 (English), lack of knowledge of some L2 rules, misapplication of some L2 rules, and mixing up functional items in L2. In the next chapter, I move on to consider the difficulties Syrian learners of English face at discourse level, in particular difficulties they face in organising information at both the sentence and paragraph level. Difficulties at the discourse level can again be related to several different factors: the way they are currently taught (the nature of teaching materials and teaching practices carried out by Syrian university students); or interference between the strategies they use in organising information in L1 and the strategies of L2. Each of these possibilities is explored in the next chapter.

### Notes

1. Since the data is collected in 1988, this means that my subjects have had six years of instruction in English. It is only from the academic year 1989 - 1990 onwards, foreign language teaching begins in the fifth year of primary schooling (see Chapter Two, page 32), accordingly, future subjects will have eight years of instruction in English.
2. This practice is taken from More English, edited by J. Hill (Hove, Language Teaching Publications, 1980), p. 7.
3. This exercise is taken from English For Secondary Schools (Book 3), prepared by teachers in the Department Of School Books (Damascus, Department Of School Books, 1967), p. 159.
4. This practice is taken from Headway, prepared by J. and L. Soars (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 7. It demonstrates both the cognitive and communicative approaches to language teaching. Although the cognitive approach has not led to any particular method of language teaching, the communicative approach makes some use of its principles.
5. By style, Labov means: people sharing the same norm (i.e. people who considers themselves speaking the same language) agree in general terms what are and are not the formal features of the language.
6. Kaana and the main verb agree with the subject.
7. 'al, Ø' are affixes attached to the noun to describe its state, i.e. definite/indefinite.
8. Table (3.3.) is taken from Mukattash's study, 1978, p. 252.
9. Table (3.4.) is taken from Kharma's study, 1981, p. 344.

10. Auty, J., 'Jordan Sees Use Of New Technology As Way Forward',  
Middle East Education, 4 (4) (1982), p. 8.
11. Hines, P., 'Technical English Flies High-with The Aid Of Kites',  
Middle East Education, 2 (5) (1980), p. 19.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Issues In Students' Writing: Linking Strategies, Modes Of Composition And Processes Of Interpretation

#### 4.0. Introduction

Since my intention in this thesis is finally to put forward a proposal for changing/reforming current methods of teaching English as a foreign language in Syrian universities (and more specifically, teaching English composition to Syrian university students), this chapter seeks to show how effective the teaching of writing and rhetorical skills is at present ('rhetorical skills' is taken in this context to mean the organisation of propositions at both the sentence and paragraph level).

As suggested in Chapter Three, if current teaching methods of English as a foreign language in Syria aim to teach grammar, one would expect Syrian learners of English to achieve advanced stages of automaticity. Analysis has shown, however, that my Syrian writers are still using controlled processing and not automatic processing. Using controlled processing means that writers are concentrating on one process at a time; as a result, integration between semantic and syntactic processing is not likely to take place at this stage (see pages 91 - 93). Besides, since recognition memory for syntactic features of an utterance is superior to recognition memory for semantic features, failure to achieve automaticity at the syntactic level would result in a situation in which the producer spends more effort on processing syntactic features which, in turn, would lead to under-utilisation of linking strategies.

In the discussion which follows, I address issues regarding the effectiveness of current teaching methods specifically in terms of the degree of success they attain in making people competent in handling and organising information at both sentence and paragraph level. To inform discussion of these issues, a corpus of data is collected in an experiment in which eleven British and eleven Syrian students wrote two texts. The first text was a summary of a story, based on pictures taken from Lynam's narrative The BMX Gang Turns Detective<sup>1</sup> (see appendix (1)); the second was a summary of Shakespeare's life based on pieces of information given to the participants (see appendix (2)). The reason for choosing the above two types - a descriptive text, and a narrative text - is that I am concerned with general problems which occur across the curriculum at university level and it is a shared need, among Syrian university students following all sorts of courses, to be competent in the above two genres, as indicated in diagram (2.8.) above (see page 49). My concern is in this way to investigate general problems of interest to all Syrian university students writing in English, rather than particular problems faced by a specific group in any one department. Moreover, in my experiment I asked the native and the non-native speakers of English to write pieces of discourse on the same genre for the following reason: for the comparison to be sound it is necessary to compare the Syrians' writings with native speaker versions in the same genre, not with published material (c.f. Kaplan (1966)). Comparing students' writings with texts from another genre, i.e. published material, is inappropriate in that different genres dictate different ways of distributing information. Scientific

texts, for instance, are different from poetic texts because the conventions followed in relating the semantic content and the formal structure of each type is different.

Besides examining linking strategies and organisation of information units, my discussion proceeds to explore new ways of information chunking, especially ways which show communication between modes of composition and processes of interpretation. In order to function effectively, writers' organisation of information is usually displayed in such a way that it facilitates readers' interaction with the text. In other words, comprehension is dependent on how successful the text-producer is in manipulating the rhetorical strategies, which serve to organise her/his information units. In their discussion of human information processing, Shiffrin and Schneider (1977) conceive of memory as a large collection of nodes that become 'complexly interassociated' through learning. Each node is a grouping or set of informational elements or informational units. When a reader reads a written text, her/his understander system uses the text to activate the required nodes of information. To explore how successful my subjects are in communicating intended meanings to an intended reader/audience I need to investigate how their texts might influence the reader's subsequent memory performance, i.e. whether their texts involve the reader's memory in an unnecessary processing which might hinder the process of comprehension - the search for information nodes from memory. As a preliminary to analysing the data, it is necessary to present a summary of some material relevant to memory performance in processing texts, especially Kintsch's (1974) proposition-based



theory and Sanford and Garrod's (1981) scenario account of the process of comprehension. The claims put forward by Kintsch and Sanford and Garrod are that:

when reading an utterance (an utterance defined here as a segment of the written text) the reader is involved in three processes:

(i) realising the logical form of the utterance presented by the grammar of the utterance in question.

(ii) transferring logical forms into propositions (information units) through the implementation of the reader's knowledge of the world.

(iii) arriving at inferences.

In the last chapter, Chapter Three, I concentrated on the grammatical competence of a Syrian group, in order to arrive at decisions regarding their grammatical knowledge of English grammar. In this chapter, I analyse strategies used by writers to make these grammatical forms relevant to the presentation of information and hence stylistically and thematically effective. This focus is an important dimension of students' communicative competence. In other words, Chapter Four explores the processes (such as transforming logical forms into propositions) involved in interpreting utterances produced by Syrian speakers of Arabic, comparing these with the ones produced by native speakers of English.

My written data, then, will be analysed using Kintsch's (1974) proposition-based theory and Sanford and Garrod's (1981) scenario account of the process of comprehension to explore:

(1) how native and non-native speakers of English structure their propositions to achieve contextual effects.

(2) reasons for the evident failure of my Syrian subjects to employ effective rhetorical strategies, or failure to organise their information units effectively. Is this failure due, for example, to features of L1? According to Kaplan's Contrastive Rhetorical Hypothesis (CRH), which I discuss below (pages 171 - 173), specific culture-language groups organise written discourse in different, culture-specific ways.

(3) whether strategies of language processing and inferencing are universal or culture specific.

Having stated the objectives of this chapter, I am in a better position to explore issues in students' (more specifically, Syrian university students) writing, namely the subsequent effects of the failure to achieve automaticity on processing syntactic features and linking strategies. This is the subject matter of the following section.

#### 4.1. Automaticity: syntactic processing and linking strategies

As stated before, my Syrian subjects have not been trained to link grammatical structures and context together: they are grammar oriented (see pages 127 - 128). They are taught English in a situation where grammar is the only factor stressed; and as a result, grammar is over-stressed, at the expense of other factors. More specifically, composition teaching as a process involving students in activities is virtually neglected, because it is believed that knowledge of English grammar is enough to produce students who are competent in writing. Concentrating on grammar - besides leading to a failure in achieving automaticity at the

syntactic level, as analysis in Chapter Three has shown - may lead to a failure in manipulating organisational strategies since recognition memory for semantic organisation is still suppressed by recognition memory for syntax (to re-cast this in Krashen's terms, there is a failure in lowering the affective filter (Krashen (1982), see page 74).

As regards the inefficiency of teaching grammatical rules, Brown (1973) describes L2 learners who know words, phrases, and sentences in a second language perfectly for classroom use, but are unable to utilise them outside of the classroom when in contact with native speakers of the target language. One explanation of this phenomenon is that the individual's full range of linguistic abilities is not displayed because the workload involved in maintaining conversational interaction has overloaded proposition handling capacities. Thus, individuals who display accurate knowledge of formal rules but do not use them in conversational speech cannot handle at one time the two competing demands of maintaining the flow of conversation and speaking accurately in a formal sense.

The problem Brown's subjects faced in speaking is similar to the problem my Syrian subjects face in writing. My Syrian subjects cannot display their linguistic knowledge of grammatical rules in an automatic way because they are not trained to do so. On the other hand, once they are trained, i.e. the task (execution of linguistic knowledge of grammatical rules) is learned, automatic processing occurs rapidly and is difficult to suppress or alter.

Failure to achieve automatic processing means that structures

or clauses are coded one by one which may result in an unnecessary processing. In some cases, clauses are repeated even where they are unnecessary, as in (1):

(1) The children noticed that person was trying to enter the Walton's, and he managed to enter that place rushing towards the opened window near the front door, and he managed to break in the house. (text 2, see appendix (3))

Here, there is a repetition of the following:

(i) ..he managed to enter that place rushing towards the opened window near the front door

(ii) ..he managed to break in the house.

(i) and (ii) can be re-written as follows:

(iii) He rushed towards the opened window near the front door, through which he can get into the house.

While (iii) saves the writer some effort in extra processing of 'he managed to' which is used twice.

The addition of redundant clauses or structures may be related to the fact that the Syrian writers process structures or clauses one by one; consequently less attention is paid to linking structures and clauses together. In (2), instead of writing:

(2) ... later he moved to London to work in theatre with the Lord Chamberlain's men The Lord Chamberlain's men was the leading company occupying the Globe. (text 5, see appendix (5))

It would be possible to write:

- ... later he moved to London to work in theatre with the Lord Chamberlain's men who were the leading company occupying the Globe.

'Who' can be used to save both the producer and the decoder

unnecessary effort, that of processing 'Lord Chamberlain's men' twice.

Processing structures one at a time, as in examples (1) and (2), leads to under-utilisation of various linking strategies such as: pronoun replacement, introducing new entities, back reference and 'and' misused.

(a) Pronoun replacement

In some compositions, lexical repetition is used with no substitution or replacement of a pronoun (no alternative mode of reference is used to refer to a word or phrase), e.g.:

(3a) ... he foun a man trying to get in the garden ...

(3b) ... looking at the man who is trying to get in the garden.

(3c) ... he rushed to the other side of the garden ...

(3d) ... waiting for him on the other side of the garden. (text 1, see appendix (3))

'The garden' is repeated four times in the text, rather than replacement by 'it'.

Or again in (4), where 'the other side' is simply repeated:

(4a)... he rushed to the other side ...

(4b) ... folowed him to the other side.

(4c) ... waiting for him on the other side ... (text 1, see appendix (3))

Or (5) where 'the house' is repeated:

(5a) ... looking at one of the houses.

(5b) ... a way from the house ...

(5c) ... to get into the house.

(5d) ... and break in the house.

(5e) ... he left the house ...

(5f) ... he found in the house. (text 4, see appendix (3))

'The house' is used six times. No other reference such as 'it' is used.

(b) Introducing new entities

In English and Arabic, new propositions are characteristically introduced by indefinite expressions and subsequently referred to by definite expressions (see Lyons (1980), and Brown and Yule (1983)). In many compositions written by Syrians, nevertheless, definite modes of reference are used for items freshly introduced. New entities, that is to say, are treated as if they are given entities. In such cases, it seems that the producer believes that s/he needs an article to make the structure grammatically acceptable. So s/he makes sure that an article is in place, but does not pay enough attention to the kind of proposition provided, whether it is new or given already, e.g.:

(6) The boy tray to have a cover and watche this stranger man.

(text 3, see appendix (3))

But who is 'the boy'? Earlier in the text, the writer has mentioned that there are 'five boys', after which reference is suddenly made simply to 'the boy'. Is this boy one of the five boys or another boy?

(7) With the childish curiosity every one had suddenly forgotten about the race and stopped watching the thief. (text 5, see appendix (3))

But who is 'the thief'? In his composition, the writer referred to a man who is going to jump over a wall, but there is no other

reference to indicate that he is a thief.

(c) Back reference

In writing, new entities are usually introduced, then referred to by pronouns;

- I met John. He looked very pale. ('John' is the new entity, and 'he' is used to refer back to a given entity.)

But it seems that my Syrian subjects have a problem with such back reference, e.g.:

(8) William Shakespeare is the eldest son of Jhon Shakespeare who married from Mary Arden in 1557 and got eight children bu only four sons and one daughter survived. He worked as a dealer and died... (text 1, see appendix (5))

Does 'he' in this example refer back to William, to John, or to one of the four sons?

(9) He (William) the eldest son of John Shakespeare, who was working as a dealer. His wife was Mary Arden who married her... (text 2, see appendix (5))

In this example the question is: Whose wife is 'she'? John's or William's?

(10) So the children rushed down the hill toward the nearest police station and they told the policemen, whom they came at once, they followed the thief who... (text 2, see appendix (3))

Here, the question is: Who are 'they'? The police, the children, or both?

In examples (8), (9), and (10), unclear back referencing could be interpreted as a result of failure of my Syrian writers to achieve automaticity at the syntactic level (see Chapter Three). Since in an

L2 learning situation, recognition memory for semantic features of an utterance is inferior to recognition memory for syntax, and since one component of the task (syntactic processing) has not yet become automatised, this means that less attention is devoted to other components of the task. In other words, various aspects of the task have not yet been integrated into fluent performance.

(d) 'And' misused

Type (1)

'and' in English can fulfil two main functions:

(i) to co-ordinate two phrases, two clauses or two sentences.

(ii) to subordinate two phrases, two clauses, or sentences, e.g.:

(11) I had my meal, and went to bed.

(12) John and Mary went to school.

'And' in example (11) is placing the clause 'and went to bed' in a secondary order in relation to 'I had my meal'; this is sequential 'and'. In example (12), 'and' co-ordinates 'John' and 'Mary'. The order of John and Mary does not affect the meaning of the sentence. One can say: 'John and Mary', and 'Mary and John'. If order is in this way not important, 'and' is co-ordinating: it joins things which are equally related to each other. In general terms, it seems that it is sequential 'and' rather than co-ordinating 'and', which is problematic to my Syrian subjects, e.g.:

(13) The man get in and stole some thing from the valuable properties, he put it in a bag and caryed it and try to get out from the same way but he fount all the cyclests waiting for him at the fince. (text 1, see appendix (3))

(14) The children noticed that person was trying to enter the



Waltons', and he managed to enter that place rushing towards the opened window near the front door, and he managed to break in the house. (text 2, see appendix (3))

(15) He took the bag and got out of the garden and then walked away. (text 9, appendix (3))

In examples (13), (14) and (15), sequential 'and' is used before each event or each phrase. Teachers, however, advise students to use sequential 'and' before the last item or last event in a sentence. As stated earlier on (see page 91), failure in carrying out a learned task is not the result of physiological incompatibility, but rather of lack of a suitably structured skill. Thus, the misuse of sequential 'and' by my Syrian writers can be interpreted as lack of training of how to realise sequential 'and'.

#### Type (2)

My Syrian subjects use 'and' at the beginning of a sentence to link one sentence with another, e.g.:

(16) The dealer John Shakespeare had been married in 1557, to Mary Arden. And as the big family is that time, John Shakespeare have got eight children, out of whom five survived (four sons and one daughter). (text 3, see appendix (5))

(17) he was born on 23 April in 1564, on 26 April 1564 they took him to Holy Trinity church in Stratford-Upon Avon to be baptized. And when he was old enough they sent him to the local grammar school to receive his education (text 5, see appendix (5))

(18) after a will, this 5 boyes saw this man with a bag going out of the house. And he looks normal. (text 3, see appendix (3))

Examples (16), (17), and (18) are problematic in the sense that teachers of English tend to correct their students with such advice as: "'And' should not be used at the beginning of the sentence'. In other words, 'and' at the beginning of the sentence is one of the things specifically ruled out by English teachers to be avoided by students. Though teachers advise students not to use 'and' at the beginning of the sentence, in some cases 'and' is, in fact, used as a linking device at the beginning of sentences<sup>2</sup>. On this matter ('and' at the beginning of the sentence), Halliday and Hasan (1976: 233) comment that people (teachers) feel uncomfortable at finding written sentences beginning with 'and' because such a feature characterises children's composition. They add that, on the other hand, 'and' can be used to fulfil a 'relational' function, i.e. operates conjunctively between sentences to give cohesion to a text. The implication of these remarks on 'and' to L2 language teachers is that students' attention should be drawn to the difference between the awkward use of 'and' in children's compositions, and its use as a 'cohesive' relation.

'And' (in Arabic, 'wa') is problematic to my Syrian subjects because, as Hanania's study<sup>3</sup> (1984) and Al-Batal's study<sup>4</sup> (1990), have shown, 'wa' is by far the most frequently occurring connective in the corpus they examined. Al-Batal reports that 'wa' accounts for 48% of the total number of connectives in the corpus under analysis; Hanania also found that there is a high frequency of 'wa' in Arabic

texts she examined. The major difference between English 'and' and Arabic 'wa' is the following:

In contrast to English, Arabic WA is not confined to the functions of coordinator and conjunct. It serves other functions as well and carries a different name in each case. (pp. 3 - 4)

These other functions of 'wa' (and) are as follows:

(1) 'wa' of state or circumstance (واو الحالبة) which introduces an adverbial clause, e.g.:

(19) We awoke and the sun had risen.

(2) 'wa' of association (واو المعية) which carries the prepositional meaning 'alongside', e.g.:

(20) We walked and the mountain.

(3) 'wa' of oath (واو القسم), e.g.:

(21) No, and God.

(4) 'wa' which carries the meaning of indefinite frequency (واو تربب), e.g.:

(22) And (perhaps) a night like sea waves

(5) redundant 'wa' (واو الزائدة), e.g.:

(23) If they come to her and her doors were open.

Bearing this difference in mind, one would expect the number of instances of 'wa' in a text to be greater than that of 'and' in an equivalent, translated text. Certainly these functions of 'wa', described above cannot be accurately translated as 'and'. Perhaps other cohesive devices are used instead. For instance, 'wa' of state or circumstance in example (30) could be realised in English by 'when':

- The sun had already risen when we awoke.

On the other hand, as Hanania indicates, there are some similarities between English 'and' and Arabic 'wa'. Both have the following main functions:

(i) a grammatical function as coordinating conjunction, linking two structures that are grammatically equivalent.

(ii) a rhetorical function, as a cohesive device, introducing a sentence and providing a meaning link or transition within two sentences of a text.

(iii) a semantic function, as a link which may carry any one of several meanings depending on context:

(a) consequence, e.g.:

(24) He heard an explosion, and (therefore) called the police.

(b) sequence, e.g.:

(25) She washed the dishes and (then) she dried them.

(c) contrast, e.g.:

(26) Robert is secretive and (in contrast) David is candid.

(d) comment, e.g.:

(27) They disliked John ... and that's not surprising.

(e) condition, e.g.:

(28) Give me some money and I'll help you escape.

(f) addition, e.g.:

(29) He has long hair and he wears jeans.

In fact, she suggests that if analysis is confined to the purely coordinative function of 'wa' and 'and', frequencies of occurrence are close (44 'wa', and 35 'and' per 1000 words of text, differing by only 9 per 1000). This largely explains why co-ordinating 'and'

appears not to be problematic to my Syrian subjects (see page 143).

If analysis is applied to non-coordinative functions 'wa' occurs much more frequently than 'and'. Accordingly Hanania concludes:

It is evident that WA in Arabic texts occurs far more than AND in English texts, even when account is taken of differences in orthography and morphology. (p. 10)

Since it is sequential 'and', and not co-ordinating 'and', that is problematic to my subjects, the implication of Hanania's findings - in this case study - is that students' attention should be drawn to differences in the realisation of 'wa' and 'and' when they are fulfilling non-coordinative functions.

Failure of my subjects to utilise sequential 'and' and other linking strategies suggests that my subjects have not yet achieved the degree of automaticity in processing semantic features of an utterance that characterise native speakers.

#### 4.2. Syrian university students' recognition memory for linking strategies

Examples (2 - 10) and (13 - 15) indicate that while encoding their texts, the producers' (my Syrian subjects) attention was mainly focused on processing grammatical entities rather than linking strategies. In other words, what my Syrian students are trying to do is to encode their utterances using correct grammatical structures, at the expense of considering rhetorical organisation. This hypothesis appears to be supported by the following anecdotal evidence: I asked some Syrian students (the same group I asked to

write the story and the mini-biography of Shakespeare) to write a letter on the following topic:

- 'Since you have been here in Britain for a while, and since you have experienced writing (sat some exams, written some reports, and will be writing some more in the future), written a Masters dissertation (and eventually you will be writing your Ph.D. thesis), write to a colleague in Syria who is coming soon to Britain to do a postgraduate degree advising her/him on writing<sup>5</sup>.

Briefly, subjects undertaking this task are required to indicate skills they think important in writing. Most exclusively stressed grammar; they did not talk about the content of their writing, or about the use of linking strategies to link pieces of information together. Students 1, 2, and 7, for instance, concentrate primarily on grammar, and it is only at the very end of their letters that they briefly point out that their writings have to be logical, or that their sentences have to be connected. Student 3, however, starts his letter with an assertion of the importance of grammar, and ends by talking about the the form of his writing or argument (that it needs an introduction, a body and a conclusion). Student 4 starts his letter by discussing formal aspects of writing and concludes by stating the importance of grammar. Students 5 and 6 are the only two who try to show that the stylistic and thematic effectiveness of a piece of writing is dependent on how successful its writer is in communicating her/his intended meanings to her/his intended audiences. In other words, they have in mind that their writing should convey a specific and organised message, and to be successful they should achieve communicative contextual effects.

They are keen to avoid distracting additional implicatures or unrewarded interpretative labour on behalf of the reader. Student 8 asks his friend to concentrate on reading, and to develop his style out of the different styles he comes across, he also asks him to learn writing skills but he does not explain what he means by such skills. It may be - though it cannot be assumed - that Student 8 is trying to ask his friend to imitate strategies used by other people to link pieces of information together. Students 9 and 10 concentrate firmly, however, on formal aspects of writing. Student 11, like student 8, proposes that her friend should read; she also refers to grammatical matters such as the use of tense.

From these descriptions, it appears that only students 5 and 6 (and possibly also students 8 and 11) discuss the use of linking strategies. The others concentrate either on grammar, or on other formal aspects of writing. The fact that only two students out of eleven clearly attempt to address the communicative function of a piece of writing supports my claim that Syrian subjects focus on producing sentences with regard to grammar rather than to communication.

#### 4.3. Modes of composition and processes of interpretation

So far, I have discussed how the utilisation of linking strategies is affected by students' failure to achieve automatic processing. I move on to explore how the communicative functions of a piece of writing are also affected by this failure. Texts accomplish interactions between writers and readers; thus interpreting them is dependent on the text-producer's effectiveness

in activating appropriate nodes of information from the the reader's memory. Involving the decoder in extra processing which nevertheless does not result in extra contextual effects undermines communication, since the effort needed to process them 'is not offset by the gain in information conveyed' (Sperber and Wilson, 1986: 233). On this matter, Cheng (1985) suggests that involving the memory in a complex task such as reading means that readers devise new structures for interpreting information units and for imposing a new organisation on information already stored. Thus, he considers this process to be the result of a restructuring of the components of information units so that they are co-ordinated, integrated, or reorganised into new units, thereby allowing the procedure to use new components. He gives the example of two alternative procedures for solving arithmetic problems, such as finding the sum of ten twos. One can solve this problem by nine addition operations. Or one can solve this problem by looking up the multiplication  $2 \times 10$ , provided one has already learned the multiplication table. A single multiplication operation would thus be equivalent to nine addition operations. Cheng argues that the gain in efficiency thus achieved is not the result of performing nine additions operations in an automatic manner. Nor is the gain in efficiency the result of an automatic multiplication operation. Rather the limitations in performance have been overcome by restructuring the task procedure. Accordingly, involving the reader in unnecessary processing affects the reader's memory performance. Consequently, the reader will be less successful in realising the intended meanings which the writer sets out to achieve, i.e. minimising the effort (memory performance)



would maximise the contextual effects of a piece of writing. Before proceeding with my examination of the data (described on page 134) to demonstrate how contextual effects of one's writing are affected by the reader's memory performance, I present the relevant literature review of memory performance to contextualise my data, and clarify my use of notions like 'recall', 'recognition', 'long term memory', 'short term memory', 'explicit focus' and 'implicit focus'.

#### 4.3.1. Recalling and memory performance

Memory processes can be broken down into three ordered phases (see Sanford, 1985: 98 - 99):

- (1) the acquisition phase: the process of learning or encoding  
information into memory
- (2) the storage phase: retention of material stored in the memory.
- (3) the retrieval phase: the process of recalling or recognising  
what is stored.

Recognition can be thought to be different from recalling in the following sense. In recalling, one carries out a search of memory to make items accessible to the recaller. In recognition, on the other hand, items are already accessible to the recaller. Since the difference between recognition and recalling is crucial to my analysis, further and more detailed discussion of issues which the two terms raise is now offered.

Kintsch (1970) interprets the distinction between recall and recognition by suggesting that recall involves two information processes, while recognition involves only one. He proposes that

when a person is asked to recall an item, the first process to be carried out is a search of memory. Once the item has been found, it is then checked to decide whether or not the item tallied with is in the presented version. This process of checking, according to Kintsch, is the only process necessary for recognition memory. Recall, then, is search plus recognition. For effective communication, processing of an utterance relies on recognition more than recalling since recognition involves the memory in less work. Thus, in examining my data, I have to investigate whether my subjects involve their readers in recall more than recognition or the other way round.

The issue of recall has been taken further by Kintsch (1974). He describes how a piece of discourse is represented in memory in terms of propositions. He suggests that a text can be broken down into information units called propositions; and that it is in terms of propositions that people understand discourse. For instance, consider the following:

(30) Mary is speaking in a loud voice.

(30) consists of two propositions: (30a) Mary is speaking.

(30b) Mary's voice is loud.

According to Kintsch, the two propositions (30a) and (30b) are two information units.

Kintsch's concept of proposition is useful in relation to what people have in their heads after they have read a text (the relationship between decoding and memory performance, namely recalling). He claims that

the amount of time required to read and remember a paragraph should be proportional to the number of

propositions in its base. (1974: 135)

His claim, of course, is investigable through experimental work. In 1973, Kintsch and Keenan proposed that two texts which are roughly the same length, but which differ in the number of underlying propositions, will require different reading/understanding times. To prove this point, they presented examples (31) and (32) below, and asked subjects to indicate when they had read and remembered the two pieces of information.

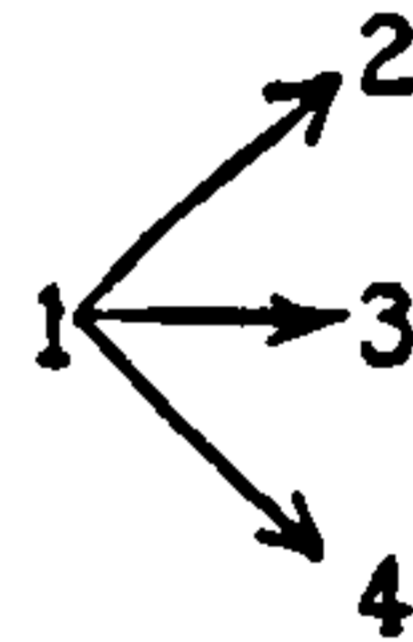
(31) Romulus, the legendary founder of Rome, took the women of the Sabine by force.

(32) Cleopatra's downfall lay in her foolish trust in the fickle political figures of the Roman world.

(31) and (32) have the following propositions:

(31) Romulus, the legendary founder of Rome, took the women of the Sabine by force.

- 1 (TOOK, ROMULUS, WOMEN, BY FORCE)
- 2 (FOUND, ROMULUS, ROME)
- 3 (LEGENDARY, ROMULUS)
- 4 (SABINE, WOMEN)



(32) Cleopatra's downfall lay in her foolish trust in the fickle political figures of the Roman world.

1 (BECAUSE, a, B)

2 (FELL DOWN, CLEOPATRA) = a

3 (TRUST, CLEOPATRA, FIGURES) = B

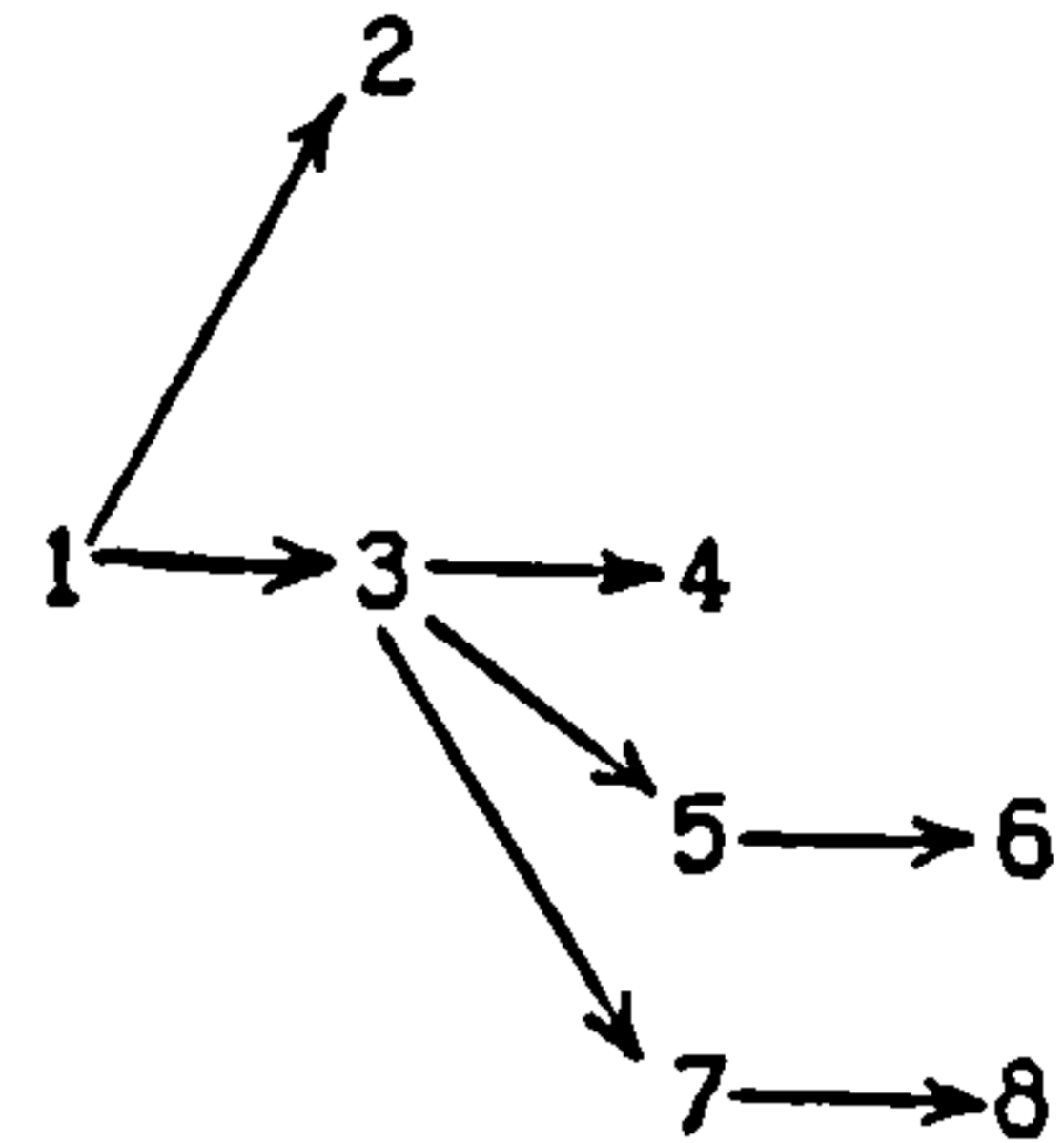
4 (FOOLISH, TRUST)

5 (FICKLE, FIGURES)

6 (POLITICAL, FIGURES)

7 (PART OF, FIGURES, WORLD)

8 (ROMAN, WORLD)



The tree diagrams next to the propositions are meant to show the relationship between propositions. Each proposition is related to another by one or more arguments. Propositions can be arguments of other propositions.

Kintsch and Keenan found that the time subjects spent reading a particular text is a roughly linear function of the number of propositions in the material, rather than being a function of the number of words. So it appears that it is in terms of propositions, not words, that people understand a piece of discourse.

#### 4.3.2. Comprehension and memory performance

Related to memory, another issue - also needed for my analysis - must be dealt with before moving to closer examination of data. Sanford and Garrod (1981) argue that discourse stimulates various search and control processes within a particular memory architecture. Unlike Kintsch (1974) who proposes that memory goes about understanding a piece of discourse by translating a text into

propositions, Sanford and Garrod suggest that the text is considered as a message and it is the 'scenario' (extended domain of reference) which is used in the interpretation of the message represented. For example, according to Kintsch, the existence of a nurse, in the mental representation which a reader has after reading a text about going to the hospital, depends on whether the nurse has been explicitly mentioned in the text. But, according to Sanford and Garrod, a text about going to a hospital will automatically bring a nurse slot into the representation. Sanford and Garrod, then, try to relate memory architecture to the effects of various devices in discourse. Memory architecture or structure is based on two necessary requirements:

- (a) a mental representation of a discourse which must consist in more than that which is explicit in the discourse itself. It is considered by Sanford and Garrod as being a structure of mappings between discourse fragments and underlying schemata which support the interpretation of discourse fragments (schemata are the underlying conventional or habitual knowledge structures which account for the organisation of a text).
- (b) a dynamic memory system. Memory search is started by any incoming discourse.

Mappings can be between explicit discourse fragments and underlying schemata, so stored memory will be in 'explicit focus'. Or mapping can be between implicit discourse fragments and underlying schemata; in this case, stored memory will be in 'implicit focus'. The difference between implicit and explicit focus is reflected in the reading times for target sentences, as in the following two

examples, (33) and (34):

(33) It is noisy in here.

Target: Close the door.

(34) Close the door, please. It is noisy in here.

Target: Close the door.

In both cases (33) and (34), certain 'role' slots are activated in scenarios. But according to Sanford and Garrod (1981) processing (34) is faster than (33), for (34) involves activating a specific scenario, and (33) a non-specific scenario.

In addition to explicit and implicit focus, there are two unfocused partitions of memory: general long term memory (LTM) and memory for the text in question. Each of the four partitions of memory (viz, explicit focus, implicit focus, general LTM, memory of the text in question) is assumed to have special properties. Thus explicit focus consists of tokens for things and events mentioned in the text, such as:

(35) John flew to London.

'John', 'London', and 'flying' are in explicit focus.

Implicit focus, however, consists of underlying knowledge which is merely relevant to the text, e.g.:

(36) Mary was sewing. It broke down before she finished the dress.

'It' is in implicit focus referring to the sewing machine which is a central concern. Implicit focus, in most cases, refers to items which are already in explicit focus, as in (37):

(37) The children are playing outside. They have been playing for an hour.

'They' refers back to 'the children' (which was in explicit focus).

According to Sanford and Garrod, implicit focus, unlike explicit focus, is a currently privileged data structure in long term memory, which is currently used for interpretation. To clarify the difference between explicit focus and implicit focus, we need to consider how the interpretation of discourse works more specifically. When an initial sentence is parsed, it can be assumed that some structure in long term memory is isolated which becomes current implicit focus, and the tokens for entities mentioned are put into explicit focus. As the text continues to be parsed, two things can happen:

Either (i) the description established will map into what is in focus

Or (ii) the description established will not map into what is in focus

If they do map, this means that the structure in explicit focus is enlarged until the point is reached that certain (usually earlier) parts of the representation are lost. On this basis, it can be assumed that the longer structures remain in explicit focus, the stronger their trace in long term memory will be.

My discussion of Kintsch (1970) and Sanford and Garrod (1981) suggests that;

(1) it is in terms of propositions, not words, that people understand an utterance. Hence, propositions will be the focus of my analysis.

(2) while processing an utterance, memory performance is affected by the following:

(2.a.) the nature of processes involved in activating nodes of

information from memory: recall or recognition (recognition involves less processing).

(2. b.) the amount of explicit focus given to propositions, the longer propositions reside in explicit focus, the stronger their trace in long term memory will be.

In the light of these assumptions, the data will be analysed to show how involving the reader in unnecessary processing affects memory performance which consequently would lower the contextual effects of a piece of writing.

Having established the nature of the processes the memory is involved in to process an utterance, I move on to analyse my data. Thus, I start by describing the data and the rules followed in the analysis.

#### 4.4. Organisation of propositions by Syrian and British writers: a case study

##### 4.4.1. Description of data

The subject matter of the following analysis is written texts produced by Syrian speakers of Arabic as well as by native speakers of English. The texts analysed were collected in an experiment in which eleven British and eleven Syrian students are involved (a description of the experiment is provided earlier on, see page 134). In addition to comparing the performance of my Syrian subjects with the performance of native speakers of English involved in the experiment, a comparison of the performance of my Syrian subjects in both languages, Arabic and English, is necessary to investigate whether the evident failure of my Syrian writers when they write



English is related to their L1, or more specifically, their writing in L1. Thus my Syrian subjects were asked to write a summary of a story in Arabic (see appendix (7)) based also on the pictures taken from Lynam's narrative The BMX Gang Turns Detective. In cases of failure on the part of my Syrian subjects to chunk propositions in English, this leads me to explore the following questions:

(1) Is it because the strategies used in chunking propositions in English are different from those followed in Arabic?

or (2) Is it because current teaching methods followed in teaching English composition at the Syrian university classes do not pay enough attention to information strategies? In other words, If organisational strategies are different, is the evident failure due to the fact that Syrian writers are not trained to chunk propositions in English?

Each of these possibilities will be explored in due discussion of examples (38), (39) and (40) (see appendix (8)). Examples (38) and (40) are written by a Syrian speaker of Arabic, (38) in English and (40) in Arabic. (39), on the other hand, is written by a native speaker of English (in English). The reason behind selecting these particular examples from the data is related to the fact that (38), (39) and (40) are realised in similar modes of writing, i.e. indirect speech. My subjects were asked to write pieces of discourse on the same genre so that the comparison of the performance of my Syrian subjects with that of my British subjects would be consistent. Besides adhering to this condition, another factor which needs to be considered while selecting examples from the data is that examples analysed should be realised in similar modes of

writing, i.e. direct as opposed to indirect speech. In the case of direct speech, as in the case of text (10) (see appendix (7)) the entity 'the children' is divided into sub-entities: Tabosh, Batot, BaHbouH, Susu and Na9na9 (the individual names of the children). Dividing an entity into sub-entities means an increase in the number of new tokens, i.e. an increase in the number of recalling processes involved in decoding utterances. Comparing an utterance realised in direct speech with another realised in indirect speech would naturally lead to a difference in memory performance since the amount of work involved in each case is different. Thus for the comparison to be sound, it is necessary to compare utterances realised either in direct or indirect speech.

Having described the data and having clarified the reason behind selecting particular examples from the data ((38), (39) and (40)), I move on to describe the rules followed in the analysis and explain the reason behind selecting specific entities, i.e. not all entities presented in the three narratives (38), (39) and (40) are analysed.

#### 4.4.2. Entities focused in the analysis

Sanford and Garrod's (scenario-based) and Kintsch's (proposition-based) account of the process of comprehension assume that text-processing involves pre-existing knowledge representations. Their account is based on the fact that background knowledge is organised and stored in fixed schemata, together with other, more flexible schematic structures. Schemata can be seen as means which we all use and assume others can use too when we

interpret discourse. The notion of a 'schema', then, provides a useful way of thinking about discourse understanding as a process of fitting what one is told into the underlying representation established by what one already knows. Briefly, schemata are fixed representations of knowledge about the world that are activated and used in interpreting utterances. Thus, in my case study I will be concentrating on representations of background knowledge activated to process the following tokens: 'the children', 'the thief', and 'the friends' (or whoever helped in catching the thief). These tokens are chosen because they present the main lines of action in the text: the story revolves mainly round a thief (the stranger) who tries to break into one of the houses; the group of children who notice the thief; and the actions taken by the children to catch the thief (either calling their friends for help, or trying to catch him themselves). Moreover, since my analysis uses Sanford and Garrod's and Kintsch's account of memory performance as a mean to throw light on my writers' success in achieving their intended meanings, a selection of tokens would serve the purpose, i.e. show how memory performance could affect the reader's success in realising intended meanings which writers set out to achieve. In other words, the main objective of my case study is not to discuss issues of memory performance, but instead to explore issues regarding the effectiveness of current teaching methods specifically in terms of the degree of success they attain in making students competent in handling and organising information.

Concentrating on the above entities ('the children', 'the thief', and 'the friends') means focusing on the propositions used

in processing them. As stated earlier, it is propositions and not words that are used (by the memory) to process utterances. In other words representations of knowledge about the world are used to transfer logical forms into propositions.

#### 4.4.3. Rules followed in the analysis

For reasons of focus and clarity, the rules listed below are followed in analysing (38), (39), and (40), i.e. transferring their logical forms into propositions.

- (1) if tokens for entities are mentioned for the first time in the text, they are referred to by their names, e.g. 'a house', 'a group of few children'.
- (2) if tokens for entities have been introduced already in the text, they are referred to in the propositions by appropriate pronouns (even if the text uses a name), e.g. 'it' for 'a house', 'they' for 'a group of few children'
- (3) to distinguish new tokens from given tokens, new tokens are capitalised, and given tokens are underlined.

These rules are only applied to the above mentioned entities ('the children', 'the thief', and 'the friends') to reach conclusions regarding the processes the memory is involved in at the retrieval phase. To exemplify the operation of these rules, consider (41a) and (41b) - which are parts of example (38) (see appendix (8)):

- (41a) There were five children agreed to go for a bicycle's race the next weekend. While they were very exited about the end Hishan shouted: look at that man, he seems he is going to jump over that wall. (text 5, see appendix (3))

(41b) There were FIVE CHILDREN agreed to go for a bicycle's race the next weekend. While they were very excited about the end HISHAN shouted: look at THAT MAN, he seems he is going to jump over that wall. (text 5, see appendix (3))

In (41a), tokens for new and given entities are in bold to show the reader how they will be presented in the propositions after the application of the above rules. In (41b), tokens for new entities are capitalised and names used to refer to them are kept as they are (see appendix (8)). Tokens for given entities, on the other hand (see appendix (8)), are underlined and appropriate pronouns are used to refer to them, even if the text uses a name. Since earlier on I discussed in details the under-utilisation of various linking strategies among which is pronoun replacement (see pages 140 - 141), in the following analysis the realisation of this linking strategy in (38), (39) and (40) is ignored to focus only on recalling and recognition (processes used at the retrieval phase).

In addition to applying the above rules, utterances (38), (39) and (40) need to be broken down into information units or propositions, since it is in terms of propositions that people understand discourse (see propositions presented in appendix (8)). Besides, propositions are also needed to work out the number of new and given entities. To investigate the nature of processes (recall or recognition) involved in activating nodes of information from memory can be done by working out:

(i) the number of tokens for new entities in (38), (39) and (40), since the memory is usually involved in recall when new entities are introduced (see tables (8.1.), (8.2.), (8.3.), appendix

(8)).

(ii) the number of tokens for given entities in (38), (39) and (40), since the memory is usually involved in recognition when processing given entities (see tables (8.1.), (8.2.), (8.3.), appendix (8)).

#### 4.4.4. Analysis

##### 4.4.4.1. Recall and recognition

Finding out whether the three texts ((38), (39) and (40)) precipitate similar contextual effects can be done by working out the percentage of each process (recall and recognition) in relation to the whole work the memory of the reader is involved in processing each utterance. Tables (8.1.), (8.2.) and (8.3.) (see appendix (8)) indicate that:

- (a) (38) involves the reader in 6 recalling processes and 22 recognition processes.
- (b) (39) involves the reader in 3 recalling processes and 31 recognition processes.
- (c) (40) involves the reader in 3 recalling processes and 28 recognition processes.

Accordingly, the percentage of these results is the following, consider table (4.1.):

Table (4.1.)

| texts | recall | recognition |
|-------|--------|-------------|
| (38)  | %21.42 | %78.57      |
| (39)  | %8.82  | %91.17      |
| (40)  | %9.67  | %90.32      |

As stated before, for my subjects to be successful writers, they have to maximise the contextual effects of their writings. This can be done by minimising the effort - memory performance. To minimise memory performance means to involve the reader in recognition more than recalling. Comparing the percentage of work carried out by the memory in processing (38), as opposed to the percentage of work carried out by the memory in processing (39) and (40), I can conclude that:

- (1) utterances (39) and (40) achieve similar contextual effects since they involve the reader's memory in a similar processing.
- (2) the contextual effects of utterance (38) are not as effective as those achieved by (39) and (40). Comparing (38) with (39) and (40) suggests that the reader of (38) is less successful than the reader of (39) and (40) in realising the writers' intended meanings, since processing (38), unlike processing (39) and (40), involves the memory in recalling more than recognition.

Since processing (38) demands more work than processing (39) and (40), the producers of (39) and (40), then, are more successful than the producer of (38) in facilitating the process of comprehension. In other words, the strategies used by (39) and (40) in displaying their information, unlike the strategies used by (38), facilitate

memory performance. Since (38) and (40) are produced by the same subject (the first in English, and the second in Arabic), I can conclude that he is efficient in achieving contextual effects by activating appropriate nodes of information in Arabic, but not in English.

Involving the memory in recalling and recognition means processing new and given entities (see Brown and Yule, 1983: 169 - 174). Syntactically, new entities are usually introduced by:

(i) indefinite article, e.g.: 'a' (consider (39b) and (40d), appendix (8))

(ii) proper names, e.g.: 'Hishan' (consider (38d), appendix (8))

Given entities, on the other hand, are usually introduced by pronouns, as in the following examples:

(i) 'they' (consider (38b) and (39d), appendix (8))

(ii) 'them' (consider (38p), appendix (8))

(iii) 'their' (consider (39k) and (40r), appendix (8))

(iv) 'he' (consider (38f), (39c) and (40g), appendix (8))

(v) 'him' (consider (38n), (39d) and (40i), appendix (8))

(vi) 'his' (consider (38m), appendix (8))

Furthermore, the number of syntactic elements referring to given entities is always greater than the number referring to new entities (see tables (8.1.), (8.2.), and (8.3.), appendix (8)). The relationship between syntactic features and recognition and recalling is relevant to my research, since this study suggests a new proposal for teaching composition to Syrian university students; and, certainly, this includes training them how to realise organisational strategies syntactically. Thus, the way new and given



entities are realised syntactically affects the internal organisation of information units. In other words, not only do syntactic realisations indicate the status of the information units expressed; they are also manipulated for different kinds of prominence to achieve specific ends (intended meanings). For further discussion, see Chapter Five (pages 234 - 237) and Brown and Yule (1983), Halliday (1967).

#### 4.4.4.2. Explicit focus and memory performance

As suggested above, the longer that structures remain in explicit focus, the stronger their trace in long-term memory will be (see discussion on pages 155 - 158). In the following analysis memory performance demanded by texts (38), (39) and (40) will be examined in relation to explicit focus.

The difference between (38) on the one hand and (39) and (40) on the other lies in the fact that in the latter pair, unlike (38), some entities are put into explicit focus, hence, they are well established in long-term memory. In (39), for instance, the entity 'the group of children' is put in explicit focus since there is a series of six propositions referring to it; consider (39d), (39e), (39f), (39g), (39h), and (39i). To facilitate the tracing of this entity in long term memory, this series is soon followed by another series of five propositions (referring to the same entity), consider (39k), (39l), (39m), (39n), and (39o). For the other entity, 'a man' (the thief), there are nine propositions referring to it, consider (39c), (39d), (39e), (39f), (39g), (39h), (39i), (39j), and (39k). Thus, I can conclude that the tracing of these two entities in the

long term memory is strong, a factor which facilitates memory performance. Similarly, in (40), the entity 'the children' is also put into explicit focus since there is a series of three propositions referring to it, as can be seen in (40b), (40c) and (40d), followed by another series of two propositions, as is shown by (40h) and (40i). Similarly, the entity 'the stranger' (the thief) is put into explicit focus since there is a series of three propositions referring to it, as in (40e), (40f) and (40g), followed by another two series of propositions, as is shown by ((40n), (40o), (40p) and (40q)) and ((40s), (40t) and (40u)).

In (38), however, some entities do not reside in explicit focus as long as entities in (39) and (40) do. For instance, there is only one proposition referring to the entity 'that man', as in (38f). Other entities such as 'Hishan' does not reside in explicit focus because, other than (38d) when the entity was introduced, there is no other reference referring to it.

The fact in (38) some of the entities such as 'that man' and 'Hishan' are not in explicit focus long enough as other entities (consider entities in (39), and (40)), the weaker their trace in long term memory is. In other words, entities expressed by (39) and (40) are traced in long-term memory in a stronger way than those expressed by (38). This evidence, like other pieces of evidence (see pages 165 - 167), points towards the following conclusion: processing (39) and (40) is less demanding - as far as memory performance is concerned - than processing than (38).

To sum up, (38) and (40) are produced by the same subject, a Syrian student, carrying out an equivalent task. One can conclude

that:

- (1) While writing in English, the Syrian student, unlike the British student, fails to chunk propositions in a way which facilitates memory performance.
- (2) While writing in Arabic, the Syrian student, like the British student, is successful in manipulating organisational strategies which, in turn, facilitate memory performance and maximise the contextual effects of their writings.

The producers of (38) or (40) and (39) are in many ways typical representatives of the two groups involved in my experiment. (38)/(40) represents the Syrian group, and (39) represents the British group (namely, native speakers of English). The major problem faced by the Syrian group in writing in English is that they involve their readers in extra processing, which, in turn, affects the readers' subsequent memory performance. As a result, readers will be less successful in realising the intended meanings which writers set out to achieve.

Failure of my subjects to achieve effective communication suggests that current methods of teaching English are not successful in producing generally competent writers in English. As stated earlier on (see pages 91 - 93), in language learning, i.e. both L1 and L2 learning contexts, failure to carry out a learned task (integration of recognition memory for syntactic as well as semantic processing) is not the result of physiological incompatibility, but rather of lack of suitably structured input. This entails that my Syrian subjects' failure to be as efficient as my British subjects is related to the fact that each group has been exposed to different

teaching methods. My Syrian subjects' success to achieve contextual effects while writing in Arabic, however, suggests that writers belonging to different cultures and speaking different languages manipulate the same organisational strategies while writing (consider (39) and (40), see appendix (8)). This suggests that these strategies may well be universal and language-independent. Thus, errors in cross-cultural communication come from the nature of the teaching input which affects students' performance (manipulating effective linking strategies), rather than from the way L1 (Arabic) structures or organises propositions as compared to the way L2 (English) does, as Kaplan's Contrastive Rhetorical Hypothesis (CRH) suggests. As well as investigating issues of information structure in students' writing, this study makes it possible to confirm or disconfirm Kaplan's Contrastive Rhetorical Hypothesis (1966), and so reflects on the broad question of cross-cultural difficulties in composition that EFL students routinely face. Before exploring this possibility, however, a summary of Kaplan's CRH is necessary to contextualise my discussion.

#### 4.4.5. Implications of data: the Contrastive Rhetorical Hypothesis (CRH) - style, logic, and culture

Working on the basis of a study of 598 compositions written by foreign university students in the United States (with the students coming from three different language groups), Kaplan (1966) suggests that there is a typology of cultural patterns followed in developing ideas and pushing arguments forward in discourse. Working within a Whorfian theoretical framework<sup>e</sup>, Kaplan compares his compositions

with published English texts, and concludes that each language group perceives reality differently and presents arguments in a way unique to them. He outlines several modes of reasoning, distinguished into two major groups:

(i) a linear mode: The linear mode of reasoning is characterised by a paragraph beginning with the main idea expressed in a topic sentence followed by supportive material. This mode is typical of English paragraphs.

(ii) a non-linear mode: The non-linear mode takes a number of shapes, e.g. Oriental languages organise paragraphs in a spiral form, talking around the point for some time before addressing it. Kaplan calls this mode 'approach by indirection'. Romance languages are taken to allow digressions within their quasi-linearity. Russian allows imperfect parallelism and subordination. Arabic reasoning basically uses parallelism.

These different modes of paragraph development are summarised in the following diagram:

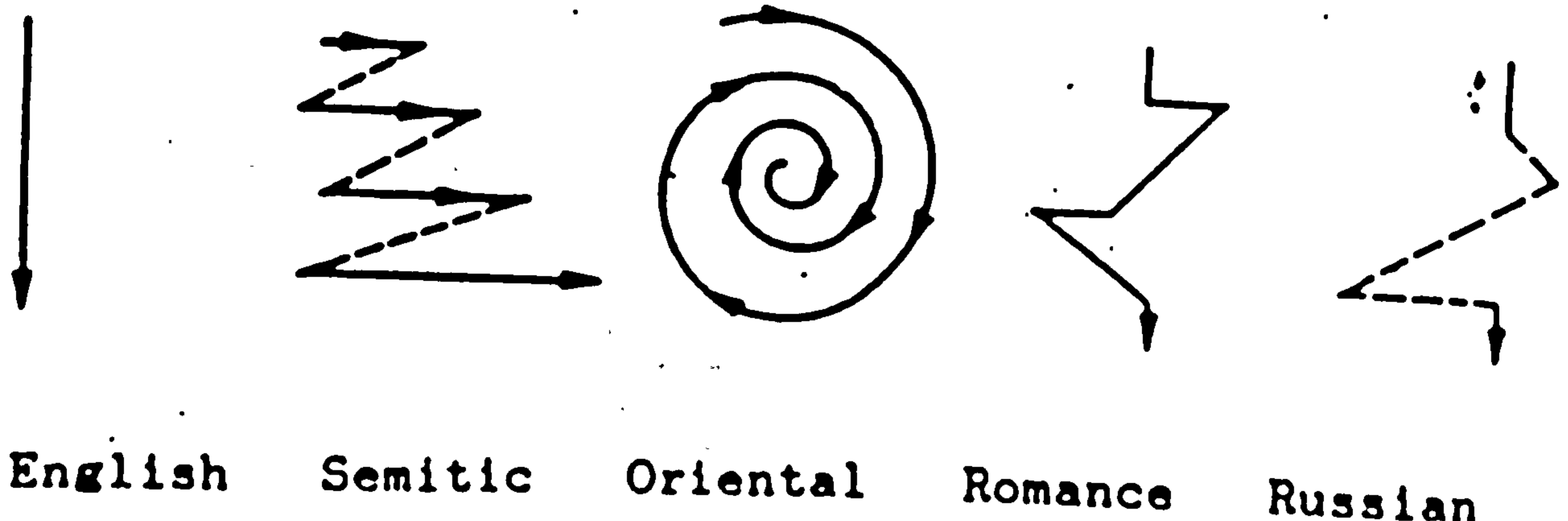


Diagram (4.1.)

(Kaplan, 1966: 15)

His Identification of different modes of reasoning leads Kaplan to believe that style and logic (the logic followed in organising propositions in a piece of discourse) are not universal. He argues that the internal logic of languages is different, and that different languages use different rhetorics or different styles. Thus, the two aspects of the CRH, suggested by Kaplan, are:

- (i) style does not cut across languages.
- (ii) logic is language specific.

To investigate explanations for problems EFL writers face, with a particular reference to my Syrian writers, means examining first the validity of the CRH. In other words, my conclusions are dependent on whether the above two assumptions are valid or not. They are the subject matter of the next section.

#### 4.4.5.1. Style and language

Commenting further on modes of paragraph development (represented above in diagram (4.1.)), Kaplan suggests that:

- (1) non-linear modes of reasoning are not well known to native speakers of English.
- (2) the linear mode of reasoning is unique to the English style.
- (3) subordination is a sign of 'maturity' of style.

The rhetorical structures of English paragraphs may be found in any good composition text. The patterns of paragraphs in other languages are not so well established, or perhaps only not so well known to speakers of English. (Kaplan, 1966: 16)

... maturity of style and experience is judged on the basis of extent of subordination. Children and educationally deprived individuals tend to write with greater quantities of coordination, and teachers strive to bring them to recognize the

value of subordination. (Kaplan, 1967: 12)

Kaplan's value judgement that subordination is a better device or a measure of 'maturity of style' is based on the following claim:

elaborate parallelism in English was a sign of elegance in style and was at height of literary fashion well into the Elizabethan period ... Since the seventeenth century, the fashion in English has changed, and subordination is likely to be looked upon as more stylistically elegant than elaborate parallelism. (Kaplan, 1967: 11 - 12)

But on what basis does Kaplan judge elegance of style? Is it that a style is elegant because it is widely used? If a style of a language is dropped, does that imply it is no longer valuable or 'elegant'? Anything which is valuable will remain valuable even if it is out of use. Nevertheless, Kaplan suggests that a mode of presentation, such as parallelism, which English, the norm, stopped using - if one accepts his claim that 'parallelism' and 'presentation' are no longer used in English' - are no longer 'elegant'. In other words, he considers English and English patterns to provide a norm; and he compares other languages (including Arabic) to this norm. Besides, this quotation is in conflict with his other claim that subordination is not well known to English writers. This quotation seems to suggest that both linear and non-linear modes of reasoning are called upon by English writers to be used in appropriate contexts. In other words, subordination and coordination are used depending on what figures and devices of meaning writers decide to use. All this leads me to conclude that Kaplan's above points are unsupported and hence invalid.

Nevertheless, Kaplan used the above points to support his claim that style is not universal. His claim is valid insofar as

realisations of different modes of reasoning are subject to the conventions of the language in question (see Hanania (1984), and discussion on pages 145 - 148). However, Kaplan's arguments are not convincing because he seems to be contradicting himself and resorting to subjective value judgements to support his claims.

#### 4.4.5.2. Logic and language

So far my discussion has focused only on one aspect of CRH: how languages have different modes of reasoning. I now move on to discuss the other main part of CRH: how languages determine the cognition of their speakers. This claim is based on the idea that logic is language specific. Logic is defined by Kaplan as follows:

Logic (in the popular, rather than the logician's sense of the word) which is the basis of rhetoric, is evolved out of a culture; it is not universal. (Kaplan, 1966: 2)

Kaplan claims that the organisation of paragraphs written in any language by individuals who are native speakers of that language will be influenced by the rhetorical preferences of the native language. He believes that language

... in the whole multiplicity of its forms, both shapes and is shaped by the experience of the society of speakers. (1967: 10)

If this is the case, L1 speakers are bound by their native tongue, i.e. L1 restricts the thinking of its speakers because it is responsible for the development of the cognitive system of its speakers. In other words, L1 only develops some cognitive strategies which meet its needs. This means that the native speakers of a language have little choice in the rhetorical forms of their



writing, and that L2 learners of a second/foreign language are likely to transfer the mode of writing of their L1 unless they are taught 'contrastive rhetoric'. But what is significant is that Kaplan believes that even if learners are taught 'contrastive rhetoric', they remain bound by their L1. He claims that

... the learner will not acquire cognitive capacity he did not already possess by the single act of learning another language; or, to put it another way, an individual whose ideas are trivial in his native language will not become a deep thinker in another language merely by virtue of having learned it. (p. 19)

Kaplan suggests that it is the native tongue which shapes the cognition of its speakers. Accordingly, writing abilities are controlled by the mother tongue, and the individual can do little to affect them. In other words, s/he is at the mercy of her/his native tongue.

Kaplan, however, is not the first to claim that cognition is determined by L1. Shouby (1951) also argues that the grammar of Arabic restricts the thinking of its speakers. Thus, he claims that

the rigidity of Arabic grammar - an extra - complex conglomeration of intricate rules and regulations which certainly restricts the freedom of the Arab thinker. (Shouby, 1951: 292)

So is it, then, that some languages set their speakers free, and others restrict them? My data, on the contrary, indicates that the problems my Syrian subjects face are language-independent, and I conclude that languages are not responsible for the development of a human's cognitive system. Nevertheless, Shouby bases his argument on the following:

(1) Since Language determines cognition, as he believes, the Arabic language lowers the level of mental functioning of Arabs

... another type of effect which the overemphasis of the value of words has on the psychology of the people who use them, namely the lowering of the level of mental functioning. When words are used for their own sake, intellectual regression is ushered; and conversely, when regression sets in, there is an overemphasis on words. (1951: 297)

(2) Since Arabic is vague and less advanced, as he claims,

(2.a.) it is hard to understand Arabic with accuracy.

Naturally, Arabic that deals with simple or familiar questions creates no difficulties; but the more novel or abstract the content, the more difficult it is to understand Arabic with accuracy. (1951: 291, my underlining)

(2.b.) the Arabic culture is less advanced.

The emphasis on sounds in Arabic is again not a unique phenomenon, as all languages pay attention to the sounds of words. Some theories even explain the origin of language by the onomatopoeic effects of sounds, but it should be stressed here that the less analytic the culture is, the more seems to be its emphasis in this direction. The literary Arabic of today still retains the emphasis of a less advanced culture. (1951: 296)

(2.c.) Arabs' arguments are empty, in spite of the fact they are intelligent.

... with the emphasis on Arabic words as such, it is responsible for the sometimes empty arguments presented by speakers who are actually both intelligent and learned. (1951: 298)

(2.d.) Arabs prefer to read material in other languages such as English.

Arabs whose English is inferior to their Arabic often prefer to read serious matter in English. (1951: 300)

According to Shouby, then, since language determines cognition, and since Arabic is vague and less advanced, it lowers the level of mental functioning of Arabs. The reason Arabic is vague, so Shouby

suggests, derives from what he calls 'general vagueness of thought'. He explains this 'general vagueness of thought' on the basis of H. Werner's 'Comparative Psychology of Mental Development', which argues that the initial stage of all perceptual and conceptual processes is characterised by just such indifferntiation, diffuseness, and rigidity. Shouby views this matter as follows:

When people are not clear about their own thoughts, they compensate by repeating themselves several times though in different words, dimly realizing that if they themselves cannot "see" their own meaning clearly, then it is more likely that others will not understand them either.  
(1951: 299)

To clarify their vague thoughts, as Shouby suggested, Arabs tend to use repetition frequently. Repetition, or what Shouby refers to as 'overassertion and exaggeration', is realised through both the grammatical and stylistic and rhetorical devices which the Arabic language uses. He refers to devices such as the doubling of the sounds of some consonants to create a desirable stronger effect. He also mentions other devices such as the use of metaphors and similes in abundance, and long arrays of adjectives to modify the same word. Yet, he fails to see repetition as 'a rhetorical strategy, a way of persuading', as Koch (1983) does. He persists in viewing repetition as a sign of vagueness in the Arabic style to the degree that

Arabs stand a good chance of being misunderstood, in Arabic, unless they overassert and exaggerate.  
(1951: 300)

Instead of viewing repetition as a technique used by writers of Arabic - or any other language - to organise propositions in a certain way to achieve specific contextual effects, Shouby considers

repetition as 'a' rather primitive globality, diffuseness, and rigidity' (1951: 299).

Shouby bases his argument on general remarks and anecdotes. Commenting on overemphasis of words in Arabic, Shouby refers to the following anecdote:

The well-known anecdote of the Arab judge who lost his position only because his superior wanted to indulge in a little euphuistic play is a good illustration of this phenomenon carried to its logical extreme. The order of the judge's dismissal ran as follows: Ayyuha al-qadi bi-Qum, qad 'azalnaka fa-qum, which means "Ye the Judge in Qum, we have discharged ye, so get up." The play on words was contained in the rhyming of "Qum," the name of the city where the judge presided, with the Arabic imperative verb "qum," meaning "get up." (1951: 195)

Shouby uses this anecdote to demonstrate that Arabs overemphasise the significance of words to the degree that they pay less attention to their meanings. Another story reported by Shouby makes the following claims:

- (a) Arabs have to overassert and exaggerate, otherwise they are misunderstood.
- (b) Arabs fail to realise what others mean if they do not overassert.

The writer once had the opportunity of observing an illustration of this twofold reaction to a linguistic condition when he listened to the confidential report of two friends: an English girl and an Arab youth. The girl complained that her Arab friend (a) was pestering her with his attentions and declarations of love; and (b) refused to take "No" for an answer when she made it perfectly clear that she was not interested in him at all. The Arab confided (a) that the English girl was encouraging him to make love to her; and (b) that he had so far shown only a little interest and admiration. Both were strictly honest and truthful even to their conscious selves, but they did not know what a contrast could be created

between Arab overassertion and exaggeration and British tact and understatement. (1951: 300 - 301)

To support a potential claim, a story is used and not linguistic evidence.

The 'overemphasis' issue is pushed forward on the strength of another anecdote; other claims, on the other hand, are stated relying on general observations which are damagingly subjective.

Examine the following statements:

(1) Commenting on colloquial Arabic as opposed to literary Arabic

They (the various colloquials) also contain pithy words and expressions which (like their equivalents in the American slang) are more expressive of human nature than are the elaborate and remote words of literary Arabic which are alien to the essence of life in the Arab world of the present. (1951: 287)

In quotation (1), Shouby suggests that American slang, of which he is in favour, is like colloquial Arabic; both American slang and colloquial Arabic are more expressive than literary Arabic. However, no evidence, or no comparison between literary Arabic, colloquial Arabic and American slang is provided.

(2) On the vagueness of Arabic

An extreme example of such a state of affairs is provided by a line of poetry, which translated literally would read something as follows: "There is no one like him among the people, except a crowned, his mother's father, his father, alive, resembles him." The line is intended to praise the maternal uncle of a sovereign, since there is nobody like him except the sovereign, his nephew. That the translation is not the source of the vagueness is attested to by the fact that few educated Arabs can understand this line even in Arabic. (1951: 293)

With regard to (2): In the same way an educated Arab finds it difficult to understand a highly poetic line of verse, an educated

English person finds it hard to understand old English or Shakespeare's language.

(3) Influence of Arabic grammar on the language itself

The endless rules of inflection and agreement, changing vowels and consonants as well as the ubiquitous accent marks according to the meaning, make the musicality (in the psychological sense) of the language an inherent part of it. So strong is this influence that it has been aptly said that in European languages one has to read in order to understand, while in Arabic one has to understand in order to read. (1951: 297)

With regard to (3): It is not only Arabic whose system has to be understood before being read. All readers of all languages have to understand the signals of the language before reading any text in the language.

(4) Influence of culture on the language

... having hundreds of names for concepts like lion, sword, and camel, as those names were originally the adjectives which his excited imagination gave to things that caught his momentary but strong interest and fancy. This again is present in all languages, but seems to occupy an unusually prominent place in Arabic literary style. (1951: 299)

Quotation number (4) does not stand because there is no evidence why relations among language, culture and society are more prominent in Arabic than any other language. It is not enough to report what others think, and take for granted that it is true.

All the above quotations suggest that Shouby supports his argument using subjective views of Arabic as compared to other languages or cultures; his whole argument is based on general remarks made by him or others, which are not supported by investigable examples.

Following Shouby's claim that Arabs overassert, E. Terry Prothro (1955) has carried out an experiment under the title 'Arab-American Differences In The Judgement Of written Messages'. The main objective of this study is to find out whether:

- (1) statements which seem to Americans to be strongly favorable or strongly unfavorable seem to Arabs more neutral.
- (2) statements which Arabs judge to be moderately favorable or unfavorable are strongly viewed by Americans.

If the answer to these question is affirmative, then, Prothro might infer that:

- (a) Americans are more prone to understatement than Arabs.
- (b) Arabs are more prone to overassertion than Americans.

For his experiment, Prothro uses two groups of Arab students to judge a number of items from a generalised attitude scale. One group of judges is bilingual and sort items in English; the other group sorts items as translated into Arabic. The results obtained with both groups are, then, compared with another group of Americans. To investigate results, Osgood's 'evaluative' factor is used. Osgood's 'evaluative' factor is a technique for the study of language and cognition

... a combination of association and scaling procedures desgined to give an objective measure of the connotative meaning of concepts. (Osgood and Lauria, 1954: 579)

The result Prothro arrives at is that statements which are strongly favorable or unfavorable to Americans can seem more neutral to Arabs; and that the opposite is also true. From this, he infers that

Arab students from these schools are more prone to overassertion than are Americans students, that American students are more given to understatement

than are Arab students. (1955: 9)

If this is the case, then, what is the norm? Neither Shouby nor Prothro provide an answer to this question. Like Shouby, Prothro is ethnocentric to the extent that, following established stereotypes, he argues

... students in the Arab world are either more emotional than those in America, or they are more emotional with respect to judgements about people. (1955: 10)

And Prothro concludes

There are cognitive differences between the two groups of students with respect to the manner in which they respond to written messages. (1955: 9 - 10)

Explaining L2 learners' response in relation to 'cognitive differences' leads Kaplan to conclude that logic is language specific. The implication of this finding is that in a cross-cultural communication, if the intended message of an utterance is not recognised by the decoder, it is because the internal logic of her/his language is different from that of the producer. This claim, however, does not coincide with findings by other researchers such as Burtoff (1984), Ouaouicha (1986) and Al-Shabbab and Swales (1986).

#### 4.4.5.3. Logical relations and existing work in the field

Burtoff (1984), for example, examines logical relations, at the level beyond the sentence in texts written by English, Arab and Japanese people. The purpose of his study is to examine how students belonging to certain culture groups organise written expository discourse in terms of logical relations, in order to ascertain



whether there are characteristic group-specific strategies of organisation. (By logical relations, Burtoff means relations which occur in a text and 'make a text a text'; he cites and adopts models which provide explicit categories of logical relationships at the level beyond the sentence, including Meyer (1975), Grimes (1975), Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Miltic (1969)).

To structure his study, Burtoff takes the following topics:

- (a) What is (or should be) the role of old people in society?
- (b) What is a bicycle and how does it work?

The selection of these topics follows from a desire to have two different types of topic: one which is evidently 'culturally loaded', and asks for a personal culturally influenced view (topic a); another which is 'universal', in that it asks for an emotionally neutral explanation of an item which is familiar to all cultures and operates in the same way in all cultures.

Data provided by different culture groups is examined to see how different groups structure logical relations, in text production, in the form of segments of information. By examining such data, Burtoff identifies patterns and tendencies which he calls 'strategies of organisation'. He also suggests that none of the organisational strategies is group exclusive, although some are culturally preferred. In other words, different culture groups exhibit all of the strategies, but to varying degrees. With the 'culturally-loaded' topic, different culture groups have preferred different strategies because they are influenced by cultural background. Burtoff comments

The data appear to indicate that untrained writers draw from the same pool of organizational

strategies, the use of which is just as likely to be influenced by the choice of topic as the cultural background of the writer. (1984: 160)

If writers belonging to different cultures and speaking different languages draw from the same 'pool' of organisational strategies, this suggests that these strategies may well be universal and language-independent.

Another body of work which reinforces the claim that languages share basically the same strategies of proposition chunking is Ouaouicha's study (1986). Ouaouicha investigates the structure of argumentative texts written by Americans and Moroccans in both English and Arabic. His hypothesis is that there is transfer of argument structure from the native tongue to the target language, as well as a transfer back from the target language to the mother tongue. To establish this claim, Ouaouicha collects seventy argumentative texts written under similar conditions and about the same topic. Using Toulmin's model of argument feature analysis to analyse the data, he finds that:

- (1) there is no significant correlation between language and argument structure. The same structures are observed in both languages, Arabic and English, as used by native speakers.
- (2) differences between linear/non-linear modes of reasoning do not distinguish the groups; instances of each are found in both groups.

These findings seem to indicate that no simple argument structure is exclusive to any one group, and the mother language is not a determining factor in the structure of argumentative texts. Differences between the two groups emerge as a result of social

setting, and social relationships present within and around the school. In other words, the environment, and the nature of the stages the learners go through in acquiring writing conventions, affect their attitudes to writing. Ouaouicha demonstrates that

... the data seemed to indicate that argument structure was relatively independent of language and dependent on the environment the authors write in and the length and intensity of the experience they have had in such an environment. (1986: 230)

A third example of the issue of style and language is Al-Shabbab and Swales's study (1986). Al-Shabbab and Swales undertakes a comparative study of Radio Damascus and the BBC, to examine their respective ways of distributing information. Their analysis is based on recordings taken off-air from Radio Damascus in Arabic, BBC Arabic Service in Arabic (translated), BBC Radio 4 in English, and Radio Damascus in English (translated). The reason they work with four different types of broadcast is related to the fact that each station is directed at a different audience. The study seeks to investigate editorial assumptions about the world knowledge of different audiences, and to explore editorial views concerning the need to adapt to differing expectations about the organisation and presentation of radio news on the part of different speech communities.

Al-Shabbab and Swales's findings shows that the four different types of broadcasting use 'text organizing elements' in a broadly similar way to:

- (1) announce the beginning and endings of news texts.
- (2) signpost the stages of the text.
- (3) identify stations and newsreaders.

Like Burtoff and Ousouicha, they, therefore, conclude that rhetorical strategies largely cut across cultures.

We have been able to show, albeit provisionally, that certain features recur across the range of radio news investigated, whether scripted in English or Arabic, or whether broadcast by an organization based in England or in Syria. (p. 40)

All the above examples, in fact, demonstrate that:

(1) since different culture groups draw from the same pool of organisational strategies, they do not operate with different logics.

(2) the social and cultural context where communication takes place strongly influences people's assumptions about the world.

Accordingly, people from all cultures operate with basically the same logic of proposition organisation. They differ only in background assumptions, not in underlying cognitive processes nor in inferential strategies. Thus, to understand what is conveyed by an utterance in a piece of discourse, the hearer/reader does not merely recover its semantic representation, but also the proposition that representation expresses and the implications it carries in a context to which the hearer/reader has access. Interaction between an utterance and different existing assumptions about the world (background assumptions) belonging to different language groups result in different representations because these representations are cultural:

they are conceived and processed in the context of a partially shared knowledge; they are, in some respects, peripheral versions, idiosyncratic transformations of common representations. (Sperber, 1985: 30)

In a cross-cultural communication, if the intended message is not

recognised by the reader (the receiver), it is because different language groups vary in background assumptions, and in realising organisational strategies. Though, underlying organisational strategies, and inferencing procedures appear universal; rhetorical styles differ across cultures because the realisations of organisational strategies are dependent on the conventions of the language in question. By conventions, I mean here:

(i) the grammatical rules of the language in question

(ii) the discursive (rhetorical) functions of the language in question (i.e. discourse markers 'and', 'therefore', 'but', etc. have rhetorical functions. They are used as cohesive ties to link two propositions, or introduce new propositions, see Halliday and Hasan (1976)).

(iii) the social and cultural context of the language in question.

L2 learners operating with data from a different culture may meet problems not because the internal logic (i.e. the logical organisation of propositions) of the data is different, but because the interaction between the data and existing rhetorical and cultural conventions is different. Thus, in Prothro's case study, the reason Arabs respond in a way different from Americans is not due to cognitive differences, but to the fact that they belong to two different cultures. What is in question is how a given concept is treated by Arabs/Americans in relation to their cultures. In other words, unfamiliarity with background assumptions is the reason behind the differences in response and not cognitive differences.

Besides, all the above studies (by Burtoff, Ouaouicha, Al-Shabbab and Swales) conclude:

- (1) In an L2 context, if writers fail to achieve contextual effects, this is primarily due to language training, not to deep cognitive differences across cultures, as Kaplan's Contrastive Rhetorical Hypothesis implies.
- (2) L1 is not responsible for the development of human's cognitive system (i.e. strong versions of Whorfian arguments do not appear to be tenable).

Accordingly, my Syrian subjects' failure to manipulate successful organisational strategies while writing in English is language-independent; a view which fits with the large hypothesis that strategies used to chunk propositions together and infer the intended meaning are likely to be universal, provided that the background assumptions are clear or shared by both the producer and the receiver.

#### 4.5. Conclusions

My analysis of texts written by native speakers of English and non-native speakers of English (Syrian) writers in English proves that

- (1) When they write in English, Syrian writers are not as efficient as the native speakers of English in organising propositions because they are trained in a way different from that of the British writers.
- (2) The belief that exposing Syrian writers to grammatical rules is enough to make them competent in writing is misguided.

- (3) Syrian writers' failure is language independent, i.e. it has nothing to do with them being native speakers of Arabic.
- (4) Kaplan's 'Contrastive Rhetorical Hypothesis' as well as Shouby's claims about the Arabic style are not sustainable, in that the problems my Syrian writers face are not directly the result of L1 (Arabic).
- (5) Rhetorical strategies cut across all cultures because strategies followed to chunk propositions and infer the intended message are not exclusive to a certain language group.
- (6) Different language groups only vary in realising different cultural concepts because background assumptions are different, as a result of cultural difference, and not language difference.

### Notes

1. The BMX Gang Turns Detective, by Terence Lynam, illustrated by David Mostyn (London, Macdonald Purnell, 1986).
2. An example of the usage of 'and' at the beginning of sentences is Christopher Norris's foreword to Harold Bloom: Towards Historical Rhetorics by Peter De Bolla (London and New York, Routledge, 1988). In the forward, 'and' is used as a linking device at the beginning of sentences. The foreword consists of 48 sentences; six have 'and' at the beginning functioning as a connective.
3. Hanania's article (1984) is unpublished. Al-Batal was kind enough to post me a copy of her article.
4. Al-Batal's article (1990) will appear in New Perspectives On Arabic Linguistics II, edited by Mushira Eid, published by John Benjamins Publishing Co.
5. The idea for this task is borrowed from the IEA international study of written composition. Takala, S., 'IEA International Study Of Written Composition: report To General Assembly', Toronto, Canada (Oct. 3 - 8, 1982), No. IEA/GA-23/10. This task is also used by Mohammed Dahbi in his research The Development Of English Writing Skills By Moroccan University Students, Ph.D. (Georgetown University, 1984).
6. The Whorfian hypothesis - or the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (since it was put forward by Sapir (1921) and Whorf (1956)) - suggests that the way people view the world is determined wholly or partly by the structure of their native language. Adopting this view of linguistic relativity leads Kaplan to draw the following conclusions: (a) logic is language specific, and (b) L1



determines the cognition of their speakers.

7. Kaplan's claim that parallelism does not penetrate in English style beyond the 17th century is invalid (see Kachru (1985)).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Developing Writing Skills

#### 5.0. Introduction

In the last chapter, an analysis of a sample of written compositions was presented to describe and illustrate some of the difficulties which Syrian students face. Following an analysis of the data, it was suggested that problems identified in Chapter Four were not triggered by mother-tongue interference or transfer phenomena, but are the result of the specific characteristics of current teaching materials and practices. The letters of advice presented in the last chapter, written by the group of the Syrian students to their colleagues telling them how to write a good composition (see pages 148 - 150), provide insights into students' own expectations. They also show what aspects of composition are considered by the students to be most important. Briefly, they show that students cannot free themselves from the belief that to write a composition means primarily to display knowledge of formal aspects of writing.

As has been stated earlier on (see discussion on pages 170 - 171), the realisation that writing in English is geared towards expressing ideas and conveying thoughts or feelings to the reader is over-shadowed by a teaching emphasis on formal accuracy. Syrian university students, predictably, are greatly influenced by how they are taught; and writing is primarily viewed as an exercise to prove to their teachers that they are using grammatically acceptable structures. Teachers constantly remind their students that each

individual exam they set is meant to be a language exam before it is a test of knowledge about a certain subject: formal correctness is taken to be more important than presenting information in a meaningful way; emphasis is placed mainly on grammar and not on discourse or rhetorical organisation, to the degree that serious composition teaching in most departments is neglected (i.e. students are not exposed to a wide range of variety). For instance, at the department of Medicine at Damascus University, first year students only have the following two books for English classes: Medicine (Book 1)<sup>1</sup>, and Kernel Lessons Intermediate (Students' Book)<sup>2</sup>. The first gives students practice in studying and using technical (medical) English vocabulary. The second is designed to assist students with practising the structures and vocabulary they have already learned. Similarly, at the Department of Sociology at Damascus University, the textbook used in English classes for third year students is English Texts In Sociology<sup>3</sup>. It consists of English texts which are read and translated in class to familiarise students with technical words. At the end of the year, students are asked to perform a written task (usually an essay or a short paragraph or report) for which they are not prepared (see appendix (9), a sample exam paper). Question no. 2 of appendix (9) asks students to write four lines about 'Social revolution and violence'. Even when composition is taught, it is taught in an abstract way: teachers explain to students that compositions have to have an introduction, an argument and finally a conclusion. Their writings have also to be divided into paragraphs. Each paragraph has to start with an opening sentence, to have a body of the argument and to conclude in a final

statement. Sometimes students are provided with notes about successful writing such as: 'Keep your sentences short, prefer the simple to the complex, prefer the familiar word, avoid unnecessary words, use terms your reader can picture, and so on'. Students learn about aspects of writing, then; but they do not know why they are learning to write in the first place. Briefly, composition teaching seems to correspond to normative (prescriptive) teaching whereby the above steps are taken to be rules for what is considered to be the 'best' or most 'correct' usage.

Two points follow: (1) these rules do not make sense because they are not supported by any linguistic evidence: they are superficial and based on common sense. For instance, why is it that simple sentences will produce better writing than complex sentences? This remark is too general, and needs to be supported by evidence from an analysis of actual texts. (2) Even if they did make sense, they would be of no use without practice. Writing cannot be learned except through training and practice. To write outside the classroom means to know how to act simultaneously in relation to the situation, topic, audience and goals. This means that teaching composition following the above technique is unlikely to be of much help to students: they never actually experience writing, nor develop skills in relating or adopting compositional styles to specific tasks, idioms and circumstances.

Clearly, grammar is not the only thing students need to attend to while writing; the structuring of the content of their writing has also to be convincing to the reader:

In putting the finishing touches to any piece of writing, one becomes aware, once again, of the

twofold nature of the whole process - the need to meet demands and satisfy the reader, and the need of the writer to satisfy himself, to do what he wanted to do. (Britton, 1975: 47)

Other than grammar, students' attention needs to be drawn to the topic, to the audience and to the writer's objective. In all languages, the same information can be expressed in different ways depending on the context, the audience and the objective of the writer (see homework (1), and discussion of workshop (3) on pages 242 - 245)); but the ways of varying focus of expression to suit context and purpose appear to be, to a large extent, specific to the conventions of any given culture.

Evidently, in Syria, teaching materials and practices have caused students' writing to be focused on form rather than communicative function. The aim of this chapter, then, is in effect to outline possible solutions to many of the problems faced by Syrian university students while writing English as discussed in Chapter Four; and to free the Syrian writers from the restrictive effect of giving primary attention to matters of form and grammatical correctness. Before discussing the proposals in detail, however, I need first to discuss three different views of composing (the expressive, the cognitive, and the social), as well as their application to language teaching in order to contextualise my approach to writing and my proposals regarding existing work in the field.

## 5.1. Views of composition and their application to language teaching

Within theoretical and experimental writing research, writing has been studied and discussed from three different perspectives. The first views writing as an act which describes the writer's experience and meets her/his needs and feelings (see Rohman, (1965), Stewart (1969), Elbow (1973), and Moffett (1982)). The second treats writing as an activity, the result of a cognitive process (see Emig (1971), Britton (1975), Kroll (1978), Bereiter and Scardamalia (1983), Flower and Hayes (1981) and (1984), and Rose (1985)). The third emphasises writing as an act of communication in a social setting, an interactive activity with a direct object (see Ohmann (1976), Bizzell (1982), Brice-Heath (1982), and Faigley (1985)). The three views are not completely distinct, but usefully foreground identifiable tendencies or contrasting emphases within conceptions of writing.

### 5.1.1. Expressive view

Within the framework of the expressive view, writing expresses the writer's feelings of self-expression: an impression or idea needs to be written down because the writer was in the mood of inspiration. Writing poetry, letters, journals and so on are good examples. Advocates of this school, including Rohman (1965), Stewart (1969), Elbow (1973), and Moffett (1982) assume that inspiration and meditation are the source of good ideas, good writing and creativity; a writer should, therefore, seize the occasion when inspiration is at hand. All these researchers are primarily considering writing in an L1 context, but, L2 methodologies often

draw heavily on results or research carried in L1; hence, teaching writing in L2 contexts, as is implied by the above view, is likely to mean:

- (1) creating the right atmosphere for students/writers to help them express their feelings, and create their ideas. Thus, Moffett (1982) recommends meditating in class, believing that writing and meditating are naturally allied activities, related to each other by means of a bridging concept - that of inner speech.

Meditation techniques show how to witness one's own mind, direct one's own mind, and silence one's own mind. Then the mind can be better shared. Teachers can give no greater gift to their students than to help them expand and master inner speech. (p. 246)

By 'inner speech', Moffett means

... an uncertain level or stage of consciousness where material may not be so much verbalized as verbalizable, that is, at least potentially available to consciousness if some stimulus directs attention there, and potentially capable of being put into words because it is language-congenial thought (discursive). (p. 231 - 232)

And by 'meditation'

... some control of the inner stream ranging from merely *watching* it to *focusing* it to *suspending* it altogether. This range of meditative techniques suggests a rough development sequence of teaching methods relevant to writing. It starts in the pre-verbal, with gazing, ends in the post-verbal, with silence, and runs from uncontrolled to controlled mind. (p. 236, his italics)

Moffett, then, assumes that writing comes to the writer: there is a strong belief in inspiration and genius, paradoxically, as acquirable gifts. One should seize the occasion when inspiration is at its highest, and seek to facilitate its arrival.

- (2) Since teachers are supposed to create the right atmosphere to

ensure that the writer feels in the right mood of inspiration, topics should aim at mediating experiences, which appears to be why in such a framework personal narrative topics are used in abundance.

(3) To stimulate inspiration - since inspiration is believed to be the source of 'good' ideas and 'good' writing - writers are recommended to read the works of 'best authors'. Not only do great pieces of art provide good examples to imitate, they also help writers in creating and developing their own ideas, since they contain 'great' ideas which might spark off the reader's own genius and creativity.

The expressive view, then, seems to suggest that meditating in class provides learners with an opportunity to concentrate on ideas and feelings which will result in creative spontaneity. This suggestion is linked to the belief that if students have enough exposure to 'good' writers, their genius will be channelled in the right path. Meditation provides the impetus; imitation of valued models provides the mechanism. But would such an input (the work of the 'best authors') result in acquired skills in academic writing, and how would students judge matters of stylistic appropriacy, in changing contexts? Certainly, canonical texts hardly seem to provide appropriate input in an academic language teaching context, because academic writing and creative writing involve different genres, each with its own characteristics and strategies (see Van Dijk (1977), De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981), and Longacre (1983)). Being trained in one of them is no guarantee of acquiring skills in the other. Moreover, since writing within this framework is assumed to be an



expression of feeling, and a means of personal development, this view is hardly compatible with students' need: which is to be trained in academic writing. Alongside the fact that this perspective does not take into consideration students' needs, it also needs to be pointed out that it does not clarify what the qualities of a 'great writer' actually are. Briefly, the view lacks coherence because it assumes that students will attain skills in academic writing by being exposed to work in a genre different from the one they are interested in; the view is also vague in that it presupposes that the reader (or teacher) is familiar with what a 'great writer' is - an issue over which there is considerable dispute among critics. Too little attention is paid by this approach to how considerations of 'inspiration' and 'style' have to fit with specific details of any given writing task or purpose.

#### 5.1.2. Cognitive view

While advocates of the expressive view focus mainly on meditation and inspiration, advocates of the cognitive view, by contrast, are interested in the nature of the writing process: what goes on in the brain while the writer is writing, and what motivates this process 'from inside'. To investigate this process, researchers like Emig (1971), Britton (1975), Kroll (1978), Bereiter and Scardamalia (1983), Flower and Hayes (1981, 1984), and Rose (1985), have examined how a writer comes to achieve a finished text. In other words, they look at changes a writer makes while writing, and at the different stages a written piece goes through before it reaches its final form. Briefly, researchers focus on identifying

covert mental operations and their behavioural indicators. Flower and Hayes (1984), for example, claim that writing is the result of contact between the rhetorical problem (topic, audience, exigency), and the writer's long term memory (knowledge of topic, audience and writing plans). To write means to plan, to translate the plan into actual piece of writing, and to review. The series of activities (planning, translating, reviewing and editing) writers follow while writing, however, do not occur in a restricted or given order. Emig (1971) notes that her writers paused during drafting to do some of each of these writing activities, spending little time in formal planning before writing. Writers do not typically work in a linear fashion, since they keep changing what they have written in, often, unpredictable ways.

The composing process does not occur as a left-to-right, solid, uninterrupted activity with an even pace. Rather, there are recursive, as well as anticipatory, features; and there are interstices, pauses involving hesitation phenomena of various lengths and sorts ... (Emig, 1971: 57)

The implications of the cognitive view for teaching writing are:

- (1) Teachers need to observe the development of the writing activity their students undertake, to be able to help them; therefore, they can and should intervene at any time during the writing process to assist their students.
- (2) Recording as fully as possible what happens during the writing act is necessary to examine all the strategies used by the writers to produce the final product. Examining strategies provides students with feedback on their writing strategies, and

so works on developing the process, rather than simply commenting on the product.

The cognitive perspective focuses on the emergent writing product to improve the writing process. Judgements of the writing product for its own sake are accordingly of little help pedagogically. Rather, protocol analyses (a protocol is a sample containing observations of a phenomenon - the nature of the writing process - which is being described, observed, or measured) should be conducted to inform teachers of writers' intentions, and to give them insights into the writing process to complement their own observations. Putting teachers' observations of the writing process and analysts' accounts of writers' intentions together results in an account of how the writing process is faced and dealt with. This account, so far, has only the limited pedagogical conclusions of providing the teacher with new insights into the writing process coupled with ways of deciding when to intervene during that process.

### 5.1.3. Social view

As has been mentioned earlier, cognitivists give more importance to the individual than to society; advocates of the social view, however, emphasise the social more than the individual. They see the individual as the product of her/his society; her/his writing accordingly represents the values and concepts of the surrounding community. Some of the champions of this view are Ohmann (1976), Bizzell (1982), Brice-Heath (1982), and Faigley (1985), who stress that writing is culturally-bound and oriented towards a specific community. They explore the contexts of writing, its

purpose, and successful ways of communicating intended meanings to an intended reader/audience. Moreover, they consider issues such as social roles, group purposes and communal organisation, and interaction with the text, examining how texts establish interactions between writers and readers, what actions people take upon reading them, and how texts influence subsequent texts.

The social view does not see written texts as detached objects possessing meaning on their own. Rather, it views them as links in a communicative chain in which their meaning is worked out in relation to previous texts and a present context. Moreover the social view also focuses on the process of composing in relation to an individual's acts of communication (her/his response to a specific situation). For these reasons, teachers following such an approach need to keep in mind the following principles:

- (1) Teachers must make writers aware of the existence of other approaches to the same task.
- (2) Teachers need to develop in the learner an ability to be context sensitive: to write appropriately as the situation requires.
- (3) Learners' attention should be drawn to the needs and expectations of a foreseen audience.

The social view, then, sees writing to be culture-bound and audience-oriented. As people grow, they take on the ways of the people around them, ways including language habits, preferences, customs, and culture. All these factors contribute consciously or unconsciously to the process of socialisation.

## 5.2. Views of composition and Syrian university students

The view I am going to adopt in planning my proposals (in effect, outlines of workshops which could be appropriately introduced into the teaching of writing in Syrian universities) is the social view. Besides the fact that the social view also draws on each of the others I have outlined, my reasons for adopting primarily the social view are the following:

- (1) Focusing on the final product of writing and viewing texts as detached objects possessing meaning on their own appears not to improve the writing skills of Syrian university students, as I have shown in Chapter Three.
- (2) The social perspective, as presented, can be widened to encompass both a cognitive and expressive dimension, whereas the others seriously suffer if unaccompanied by a social perspective.
- (3) Since the social view considers language as an instrument of social interaction rather than as a system that is viewed in isolation, it is concerned with the way an individual acquires language and uses it in order to communicate with others in her/his social environment, i.e. write appropriately as the situation requires (an important issue neglected by traditional methods of teaching English as a foreign language). Being context sensitive, I believe, may reduce:

(a) errors like:

- (1) 'heavy coffee' instead of 'strong coffee'<sup>4</sup>

According to Halliday (1976) 'strong' is a member of a class that enters into a certain structural relation with a class

of which 'coffee' is a member, i.e. 'strong' and 'coffee' collocate with each other (collocation refers to the restrictions on how words can be used together, see Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 284 - 291). Similarly, in Arabic, 'heavy' is a member of a class that enters into a certain structural relation with a class of which 'coffee' is a member. Accordingly, the reason for (1) is that Syrian university learners of English are not aware of the lexical relations established between different members of classes in different languages. This failure, as Chapter Three and Four have suggested, is the result of the teaching practices students exposed to. Since different teaching emphases result in different outcomes, the focus on 'grammar' and not on how grammatical structures are realised in different contexts would lead to the above failure represented in (1).

(b) inconsistency of register: the use of colloquial phrases, e.g.: 'all of a sudden' (text 2, see appendix (10)), 'In a way or another' (text 3, see appendix (10)), 'tear around' (text 4, see appendix (10)), 'a lot' (text 5, see appendix (10)). These examples are taken from data relating to an experiment in which a group of six Syrian students were given ten minutes to write whatever they liked.

(c) consideration of the addressee: The letters of advice written by my Syrian subjects (see Chapter Four, pages 148 - 150) show that only two students (students no. 5 and 6) out of eleven pay explicit attention to a reader's or audience's response to a piece of writing.

Most of the subjects involved in the above experiment ended up writing something related to their field of interest; things they have memorised or studied (see appendix (10)). No consideration of the context in which the utterance is to take place, or of the addressee (to whom the utterance is addressed) is brought up or discussed. For instance, student no. 1 defines cohesion: 'Cohesion is a semantic relation. It is of two kinds: Grammatical and lexical'. Student no. 2 writes a poem which she has memorised a long time ago, and then comments briefly on it. Student no. 3 writes about Joyce's Dubliners: 'Joyce presented Dub as a storehouse of symbolism awaiting apprehension and interpretation'. Student no. 4 is the only one who talks about a general topic (himself): 'I always prefer if I have time to think of myself and ask what I want and why or for what purpose I need to do that thing and not that'. Student no. 5 writes a summary of D.H. Lawrence's life: 'D.H. Lawrence is an outstanding twentieth-century writer. He was born in 1885 and died on 3rd March 1930'. Student no. 6 comments on Hamlet: 'The main thing in the play "Hamlet" remains why does Hamlet hesitate'. What no. 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 write resemble quotations taken from a book (either from a discourse book, or a commentary book on the work of a poet, or a book of criticism). Nevertheless, for subjects no. 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6, writing down things which they know well means that they are sure that their structures are grammatically correct.

All the above errors derive from the fact that Syrian university students are expected to carry out tasks for which they are not

prepared: they are asked to produce pieces of writing without having experience or training in writing skills. In other words, current methods of teaching English in the Syrian context provide learners with knowledge without skill. Consequently, adopting a social view of writing is compatible with communicative approaches to language teaching - which emphasise the processes of communication: knowing how to use language appropriately in different situations, and how to respond to different tasks - but, on the other hand, the social view does not cause learning. Hence, besides adopting the social view, approaches to language teaching should also be concerned with the processes involved in language use, i.e. realising that 'knowledge of a language' does not necessarily mean 'ability to use the language'. Thus, Johnson (1982) thinks that language teaching should lay emphasis on learners' ability to understand and convey information; and, therefore, he suggests two aspects of communicative language teaching which should be incorporated into the syllabus. Firstly, 'task-oriented' activities have to be introduced into the syllabus: learners have to be presented with 'tasks to be mediated through language'. (p. 150) Secondly, 'actual meaning' should be central to these tasks, which should be of the type

where success or failure is seen to be judged in terms of whether or not these tasks are performed.  
(p. 150)

Similarly, Littlewood (1981) remarks that to get learners to utilise knowledge given to them in a communicative way, they must

develop strategies for relating these (linguistic) structures to their communicative functions in real situations and real time. (p. 4)



Since 'task-oriented' language teaching provides a purpose for the use and learning of a language other than simply practising language items for its own sake, and approaches communicative language teaching on the basis of clear understanding of what communicative processes various language activities involve, it is, then, a more effective way of learning a language. On the effectiveness of tasks, Hillocks (1979) and (1982) (see discussion on pages 282 - 285) also argues that instructional activities which precede writing are more powerful in causing effective change in the quality of students' writing than assignments alone. Moreover, in agreement with 'task-oriented' language teaching, in their teaching materials, linguists like Grellet (1981), Nuttall (1982), McRae and Boardman (1984), and Durant and Fabb (1989), have designed activities which aim to develop fluency in the processes involved in language use, as well as to provide students with the opportunity to examine language in context.

To sum up, what follows from this discussion is that 'task-oriented' language teaching meets the needs of Syrian university students. Exposing Syrian university students to activities and not practising drills in the use of English grammar is likely to result in 'intended learning outcomes' (see Johnson (1967), Lewy (1977), and Taylor and Richards (1979)), that of skilled in academic writing - which current methods of teaching English followed in Syrian university classes fail to achieve, as Chapters Three and Four have shown.

### 5.3. Views of composition and teaching of writing in Syrian university classes

#### 5.3.1. Why workshops?

Before discussing how to organise and design a workshop, and before giving examples of workshops, an explanation of why workshops in particular are needed in the Syrian context to improve the writings of Syrian university students is necessary.

Workshops provide a purpose for the use and learning of a language, other than simply learning language items for their own sake. In other words, the use of workshops in classrooms make learning an interactive negotiation, i.e. make language more communicative. Communicative approaches to language teaching, in recent years, have been the most influential on language teaching in L2 contexts as well as L1 contexts (see Littlewood (1981), Brumfit and Roberts (1983), Richards and Rogers (1986)). Communicative approaches to language teaching are a heterogeneous collection of theoretical perspectives which consider 'communicative competence' as their key concept. 'Communicative competence' is associated with Hymes (1972), who uses the term to refer to a knowledge of sociolinguistic as well as grammatical rules. To communicate successfully, Hymes argues, a speaker has to consider producing appropriate utterances in particular contexts. Hymes also takes into consideration non-cognitive factors such as motivation and attitude, and the relationship between the nature of the event in which the utterance takes place, the language performance, and the competence of the participants.

In agreement with Hymes, Halliday recognises the importance of

the social context of language. In Halliday (1970), he discusses three main functions of language. They are: (1) the ideational, (2) the interpersonal, and (3) the textual functions. The first and second functions are further classified into sub functions:

(1) The ideational function

1.1. the experiential function

1.2. the logical function

(2) The interpersonal function

2.1. the interactional function, also divided into sub-categories:

2.1.1. social

2.1.2. instrumental

2.2. the personal function

The ideational function involves both the communication of ideas (the experiential function) and the organisation of ideas or relating ideas to each other in a logical order. The interpersonal function establishes and maintains social relations (the social interactional function), regulates language behaviour (the instrumental interactional function), and expresses feelings and attitudes (the interactional personal function). The textual function relates to how language operates in the creation of texts, and involves cohesion and coherence (see Halliday and Hasan (1976)).

Only one of Halliday's three functions of language is met by recent teaching methods in Syria: the ideational function. Failure to recognise the other two functions means failure of recent teaching methods in meeting their 'intended outcomes', producing students who are competent in writing skills: for to write means to

know how to act in relation to the topic, audience, and goals, i.e. one's writing needs to be appropriate to the context in which it is produced.

Halliday's account of the functions of language and Hymes's 'communicative competence' have changed linguists' and teachers' views of language and language teaching, their perception of what communication is, as well as their judgement concerning appropriate syllabus design and methodology for the development of communicative competence (see Brumfit and Johnson (1979), Littlewood (1981), and Johnson (1982)). Communicative language teaching has given considerable attention to activities, generally engaging students in experience of learning through exploration rather than being passive recipients of information. In other words, communicative language teaching at its most general terms involves an attempt to reform traditional modes of instruction which are teacher-centred by making them learner-centred.

Briefly, teaching of language as communication is based on a careful consideration of the nature of language presented to the learner, and of the language user's activities. Such consideration is the starting point for my proposal for activities (workshops) to be introduced to Syrian university writing classes to reduce the problems faced by Syrian university students discussed in Chapter Four. In other words, the aim of this chapter is to propose a variety of different kinds of tasks which Syrian university students are expected to carry out to give them appropriate practice in academic writing. Success in 'task-oriented' language teaching, as has been stated earlier (see page 207 - 208) is, however, dependent

on whether learners' performance meets teachers' expectations; therefore, a discussion of the steps followed in organising tasks so that learners are involved in processing and understanding aspects of language use is necessary at this stage. Besides, this discussion also clarifies the procedures I carried out in planning my own workshops.

### 5.3.2. How to design and organise workshops

Having explained why it is activities such as workshops which are needed in Syrian university classes, I move on to discuss the steps followed in planning and organising a workshop.

While planning a workshop, the following steps have to be considered carefully<sup>6</sup>:

- (a) Decide what you want to teach (which aspect of writing one needs to discuss or explore).
- (b) Collect material you think it is appropriate for your group of learners to examine at this stage of their learning, and which also meets your objective.
- (c) Having worked out the points you want your students to explore, think of questions or commands which will make them raise these points in the discussion of the workshop in class. Raising the intended points can be done by forming the questions or commands in such a way that they are not a yes/no question, but rather activities which involve students in examining and analysing the material, and looking for explanations.
- (d) Make sure that the material chosen as well as the tasks (questions/commands) required to be carried out are suitable to

fit the time allocated to the class or to the workshop. In other words, be realistic about the time. Divide the given time in a way so that each task has enough time to be fulfilled. Also make sure to keep some time at the end of the activity for the feedback session. Feedback is important so that all groups report to each other their results, and so they can learn from each other's findings.

(e) Ask students to work in groups. Encourage them to be co-operative.

(f) Make sure your commands or instructions are clear. State them as simply as you can.

(g) Assign a homework to be done after each workshop. The homework should require students to engage themselves in an activity similar to the one done in the class. The aim of the homework is to give students the chance to practice or apply what they have learned to other texts, and to give the teacher an insight into her/his workshops, i.e. are her/his workshops fulfilling the function set by her/him to achieve?

Planning a workshop, then, means transferring ideas into activities, and making learning an interactive negotiation (see Grellet (1981), Nuttall (1982), Jolly (1984), McRae and Boardman (1984), Fabb (1988), Durant and Fabb (1987) and (1989), Durant, Mills and Montgomery (1988), and Ingram and King (1988)). These guidelines as they stand are useful, since they consider ways in which classroom teaching procedures can be made to reflect a coherent model of communicative skills; however, in order to promote real communication between students, there must be an 'information gap'

between them, or between them and their teacher. Johnson (1982) suggests that without such a gap, the classroom activities and exercises will be mechanical and artificial. Absence of 'the information gap' element may lead to a failure in :

(1) capturing students' interest. Thus, this might explain

the unpopularity of foreign languages in school curricula - one recipe for boredom being the repetition of the known to the knowers. (Johnson, 1982: 151)

(2) involving students in the processes by which interaction takes place.

If the listener already knows the pragmatic information content of what his interactant will say, then no scanning for such content will take place; nor will responses be formulated within real time based on information just received. (Johnson, 1982: 151)

'The information gap' is important to ensure practice of the processes of communication. It is 'a vital prerequisite to fluency practice' (Johnson, 1982: 151), see also Widdowson (1978).

So far, I have been discussing characteristics of workshops in general. Workshops can be used in different teaching contexts to achieve different outcomes, such as training learners in reading skills, in analysing literary texts, etc. In this study, however, my objective in carrying out workshops is to train Syrian university students in academic writing skills, and to help them to free themselves from constraints of formal accuracy put forward by current teaching methods. Exposing Syrian university students to activities which are listed below aims to make learners sensitive to language: language is used for specific ends. Accordingly, they are asked to do different tasks such as looking for syntactic variety

(e.g. 'simple sentences' as opposed to 'complex sentences'), syntactic clues (e.g. 'a' as opposed to 'the', 'new information' as opposed to 'given information'), as well as strategies used in realising utterances (e.g. repetition). Besides making students sensitive to language, involving them in the above tasks gives them insights into information processing, i.e. the processes and strategies which writers use in working out meanings in a written discourse. Clearly, the tasks, then, involve Syrian university students in analysing written texts, or more specifically, reading a given input, and then using the input to reach conclusions about writing. The use of reading skills to throw lights on other tasks such as writing is also suggested by Grellet (1981), who demonstrates that reading involves a variety of skills, some of which are the following<sup>s</sup>:

- (1) Understanding the communicative value (function) of sentences and utterances
- (2) Understanding relations within the sentence
- (3) Understanding relations between the parts of a text through lexical cohesion devices
- (4) Understanding cohesion between parts of a text through grammatical cohesion devices

Being involved in reading means that learners are exposed to language which is used for real communicative purposes. Analysing as well as understanding how a given text works to achieve specific ends draws learners' attention to generalisations about the nature of language which they can apply in their own writing.



### 5.3.3. Students' responses to workshops

Exploring issues of designing workshops, i.e. how workshops can be organised to raise issues related to communicative function of language, this chapter moves on to provide a range of models for appropriate workshops. I argued earlier in the thesis that the Syrian students' concentration on grammar leads them to undermine the rhetorical nature and functions of written discourse. Thus, to illustrate fully how the workshops proposed can teach the aspects of language use, identified as necessary in the preceding chapters, trials of a number of selected workshops are carried out and their answers analysed. Briefly, the aim of this section is to present examples of workshops. However, before proceeding to do this, a distinction should be made between two different types of workshops: General workshops and field-related workshops. General workshops aim at familiarising students with:

- (1) the difference between writing and speech
- (2) the difference between the different styles used in both writing and speech
- (3) internal relations among the units of written/spoken discourse
- (4) external relations between the text and the situation, the audience, the writers' objectives (appropriateness)

Field-related workshops are of two kinds: (1) those related to Science and Technology, and (2) those related to Humanities.

The major difference between general workshops and field-related workshops concerns the fact that the first tackles general aspects of language which can be of use to all Syrian university students. The second, on the other hand, deals with specific aspects of

language related to a specific field, therefore, it is of interest to the group concerned, i.e. it only meets the needs of a specific group.

Presentation of both general workshops and field-related workshops is as follows:

- (1) a statement of the aims of the task
- (2) the task
- (3) the follow-up task (a homework)
- (4) the responses (a summary of students' responses)
- (5) commentary on students' responses to find out whether or not tasks specified in the objectives of the activity are performed.

#### 5.3.3.1. General workshops

##### Task (1)

##### 1- Aims of the task

Workshop (1) aims to explore issues related to register, i.e. variation in a person's writing according to

- (1) the type of situation
- (2) the person or persons addressed
- (3) the topic discussed

While writing, one should consider the question of multiplicity of situations and appropriateness. In the Five Clocks, Joos (1967) describes five styles of English usage ranging from informal to formal with the emphasis on how language changes according to the relationship among speaker and listener/writers and audience, and the situation in which they are involved. The five styles are: the formal style, frozen style, casual style, consultative style and the

intimate style.

At the formal level, the speaker presents information without direct feedback from the listeners. The structure of the presentation is likely to be complete. Language used by lecturers can be classified under this type of style. Frozen style is the formal language of print. Casual style is part of phatic communion function of language. Language used in this style is meant to establish a friendly atmosphere among the participants. The consultative style centres around public information, e.g. asking somebody for direction in the street. The intimate style is the most informal style. Language used by close friends is a good example.

Similarly, Halliday and Hasan (1976) recognise three types of dimension which dictate the form of language in a specific context or situation: 'field', 'mode', and 'tenor'. Field refers to the subject matter (topic) picked up by the writer/speaker to write/speak about, and the purpose of the writer/speaker behind presenting this topic. Mode refers to the medium of communication used (written/spoken), and its function (persuasive, phatic communion, etc.). Tenor depends on the relationship between the addresser and the addressee. Register, then, is constituted by:

The linguistic features which are typically associated with a configuration of situational features - with particular values of the field, mode and tenor - ... (Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 22)

Any violation of the above three elements, field, mode, and tenor, will make the form of language used inconsistent:

To give a boxing commentary in the language of the Bible or a parish-church sermon in legal language would be either a bad mistake, or a joke.

(Trudgill, 1974: 103)

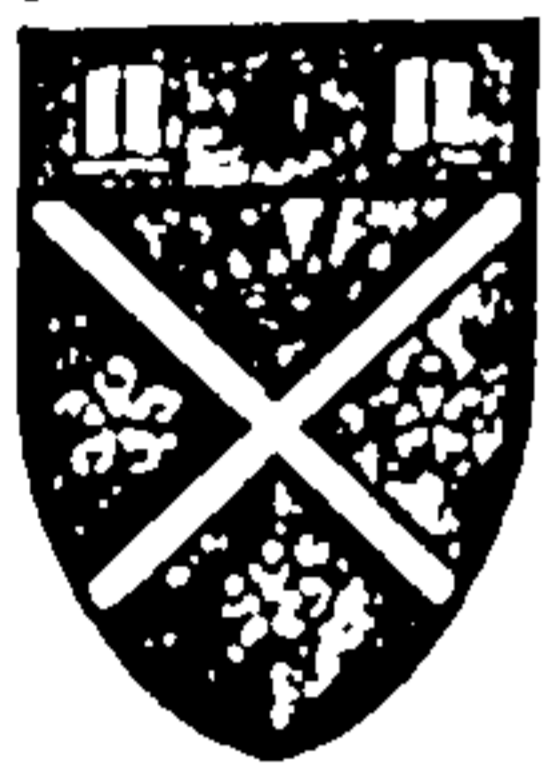
What follows from the above discussion is that a particular register often distinguishes itself from other registers by having a number of distinctive words, by using words or phrases in a particular way (e.g. in football, penalty shoots, offside), and sometimes by special grammatical construction (e.g. legal language), see Hudson, 1980: 48 - 51. Keeping this in mind, Workshop (1) involves students in an analysis of two texts, so that they would reach generalisations about how different topics dictate different registers. It also raises issues related to word choice, type of sentences used, order of sentences in relation to the context and to the type of relationship between the addresser and addressee. It is an activity which should last for only one hour. It consists of four questions, the answers of which have to be worked out during the first forty minutes (10 minutes each). The remaining twenty minutes are left for students to get feedback from each other and the teacher.

2- The task

Workshop (1)

Language In Use

Text 17:



University of Strathclyde

The Principal

invites you to attend a

**WELCOME CEREMONY FOR NEW OVERSEAS STUDENTS**

on Wednesday 16 October 1985, at 2.00 p.m.

in Glasgow Cathedral

and afterwards to a Reception in

The Lord Todd

(Please produce this card at the entrance to the Cathedral and the Lord Todd)

(You are asked to be seated in the Cathedral by 1.45 p.m.)

*RSVP by October 11  
on card enclosed*

Text 2:

Mary has written a letter to Susan to invite her to a party.

21. 3. 89

Hi Susan,

Thanks for your lovely letter. I had it two days ago. Amazing it seems that your letter took a month to reach me. You know, the strike made a mess of all the letters. Anyway, I got it at the end, better late than never.

Susan, I'll be having a party in my flat on 29th of this month. Hope you can make it. You should come, I have too many things to tell you. I didn't tell you about my holiday in Yugoslavia. Remember, I told you that I am going to Rovinj. It is a busy centre

for sailing, the boats are lovely especially the yachts ... and ... I'll tell you all the details when you come over. Oh, I had a terrific time. See you soon! O.K.!

Love,  
Mary

- Work in pairs, take notes so that you can report back at the end on what you found.

1- (10 minutes)

Identify for each text the addresser (the writer), and the addressee (the reader).

| Text   | addresser | addressee |
|--------|-----------|-----------|
| Text 1 |           |           |
| Text 2 |           |           |

2- (20 minutes)

2. a. (10 minutes)

Specify the form of language used in both texts (formal, informal). Give an explanation for your decision (think of words or expressions mentioned, think of the general layout of the text, think of the structure of sentences, etc.). Accordingly, decide the nature of the relationship between the addresser and the addressee in text 1 and text 2.

2. b. (10 minutes)

Would it be possible for text 1 and text 2 to have the same form? If not, explain why. Try to relate the form of the text to the purpose it is used for.

Text 3: a

Adamson Steel Corporation  
4942 South 14th Street  
Gary, Indiana 46403  
Telephone (219) 362-3862  
Telex 25-6182

June 24, 1981

Ms Roberta Carter  
Box 238  
Ogden Dunes, Indiana 46368

Dear Ms. Carter

We regret to inform you that we have hired another applicant for the job of clerk-typist. We have carefully checked your qualifications. As a result, we have decided that we need someone with more office experience for this particular position.

Sorry Roberta about this. I did all my best but it seems there is no way for you to get this job. Never mind! You might have a better luck next time. Don't be sorry for it. If you feel depressed come round for a cup of tea or coffee.

We would like to thank you for considering our company. Please contact us if there are further questions.

Sincerely,  
Elizabeth Crane  
Director of Personnel

EC: ajb

3- (10 minutes)

In text 3, the form of language used is not consistent.

- a) Decide which section of the letter is different from the other section.
- b) Explain why it does not fit. Are grammatical errors causing the problem? If not, what else could be the reason for this problem?
- c) If the above letter was produced by the secretary in an interview for a job, what would be the effect of this letter, or more specifically, this section on the reader?

3- The follow-up task

Homework (1)

- Imagine that you have had a grant from Strathclyde University to attend a conference related to your work in France.

1- Write a letter to your supervisor to tell her/him about the conference. (200 words)

2- Write a letter to your best friend to tell her/him about the conference. (200 words)

This homework is designed as an exercise for students to apply what they have learned to other activities, as well as providing the teacher with feedback on their performance. Students are expected to look for different kinds of information (the content of the two letters should be different), different usages of register (perhaps formal in the first, informal in the second; depending on the relationship between the addresser and the addressee), the general layout etc.

4- The responses

While trying out workshop (1), my Syrian subjects gave the following answers:

Answers to question 1

1- Text 1 is an invitation from the Principal of Strathclyde University to overseas students.

2- Text 2 is a letter from Mary to Susan.



Answers to question 2. a.

1- The choice of words used

The language of text 1 seems formal because of the following:

Text 1: please produce this card

you are asked to be seated

The language of text 2 seems informal because of the following:

Text 2: Hi (at the beginning), love (at the end)

amazing, O.K.

2- The type of information stated in text 1

Text 1:

very specific: it states the exact time, the place, the date, details about the meeting (going to the Cathedral first, and then a reception in The Lord Todd).

Text 2:

less specific: because the two persons know each other very well. Susan knows the address of the flat, so there is no need for mentioning the address.

3- The layout of the text

Text 1 is organised in a specific way. The script used varies in text 1. Some sentences/clauses are written in capital letters, others in small letters, others are bold. None of these features are available in text 2.

4- Sentences

All the sentences in text 1 are complete. In text 2, there is an incomplete sentence.

Abbreviations are used in text 2: I'll, didn't. None is used in text 1.

Accordingly, the relationship between the principal and the students is formal/very formal, and the relationship between Mary and Susan is informal.

Answers to question 2. b.

- The first letter has to be formal because the relationship between the principal and the student is formal. The principal has the power over students, and he wants to maintain this relationship.
- The second letter has to be informal because Mary and Susan are close friends, hence it is funny and strange if Mary addresses Susan formally.

Answers to question 3

- The second paragraph which is different from the other paragraphs was identified easily by the group of the Syrian students. The reason it does not fit because the language used in this section is very informal unlike the rest of the letter which is very formal. The effect of this section on the reader: It shows how inefficient the secretary (or whoever wrote the letter) is.

#### 5- Commentary

As has been suggested above, success in task-oriented language teaching is dependent on whether or not students perform the tasks assigned for them, thus meeting the objectives I stated earlier (see pages 217 - 219). My Syrian subjects realised that, in spite of the fact that the two texts are invitations, the nature of their vocabulary, types of sentences used, order of sentences, general

layouts are different. They interpreted the difference in the range of words and structures used as a guide to the nature of the relationship between the addresser and addressee in the two texts. While in the first text, the relation is formal, in the second, it is informal. Such remarks draw students' attention to generalisations about register such as:

- (1) Language has to be appropriate to the particular occasion or situation used for.
- (2) Different topics dictate different types of registers.
- (3) Addressing different audiences dictates different types of registers.

These generalisations throw light on possible ways of solving problems identified in appendix (10), discussed on pages 204 - 206. Failing to apply the above aspects of register means failure on the part of the writer to use language appropriately to achieve the functions for which it is used (i.e. focusing on grammatical realisation of one's utterances rather than appropriateness - a view given by my subjects (see Chapter Four, pages 148 - 150) - undermines the contextual effects of her/his utterances). Besides, it might have negative results, such as losing her/his job, if s/he was the the secretary who wrote text 3.

## Task (2)

### 1- Aims of the task

Workshop (2) aims to show how different media dictate different ways of organising information. In an act of communication, there is usually a sender, a message which is transmitted, and a receiver (a

person or persons for whom this message is intended). A message usually has two distinctive elements: a message form, and a message content. The message form relates to the medium or channel used in conveying an intended meaning; the means by which a message is conveyed. A message content refers to what is actually conveyed. The choice of a linguistic medium (spoken or written) is one of the determining factors in what ways the language is organised (including types of sentence structure, word choice, intonation, and stress) to convey the meaning of what to be said or written. Thus, workshop (2) focuses on the role of the media in communication, or more specifically, differences in form between written and spoken language.

In their discussion of the differences between written and spoken language, Brown and Yule (1983) list some features which distinguish speech from writing:

- (1) The syntax of the spoken language is typically less structured than that of written language. Unlike the written language, the spoken language contains many unfinished or incomplete sentences. Besides, the nature of the syntax used in the spoken language is different from that of the written language: in the spoken language, it is more simple because it contains little subordination.
- (2) Unlike spoken language, written language makes use of a wide range of metalingual markers - whose function is to mark relationships between clauses (e.g. when, temporal marker). In spoken language, however, structures are related to each other mainly by 'and', 'but', and 'then'.

- (3) In written language, the packaging of information related to a particular referent can be concentrated. While in a written discourse, it is common to come across heavily premodified noun phrases, in spoken discourse this is rare.
- (4) In speech, speakers rely quite heavily on voice quality, the emotional colouring of utterances, the placing of casual or intentional pauses, the posture of the body, the gestures of the hands, the expression of the face, contact between eyes and the like. None of these features are available to the writer, therefore s/he has to be explicit for her/his writing stands by itself: it has to be a complete unit to generate its own context.
- (5) Speech is marked by the use of pauses, and pause fillers, writing, on the other hand, is complete.
- (6) While in speech, speakers may make false starts, and therefore correct themselves, in written discourse, whatever is written stands against time and space: it cannot be corrected or changed.

All these features demonstrate how the medium of communication used (written/spoken) affects the form used in realising the information content (see Hymes (1974), and Hudson (1980)): this remark is the main issue task (2) aims to explore.

2- The task

workshop (2)

Writing as opposed to speech

Text 1'°:

And then, in the blowing clouds, she saw a band of faint iridescence colouring in faint shadows a portion of the hill. And forgetting, startled, she looked for the hovering colour and saw a rainbow forming itself. In one place it gleamed fiercely, and, her heart anguished with hope, she sought the shadow of iris where the bow should be. Steadily the colour gathered, mysteriously, from nowhere, it took presence upon itself, there was a faint, vast rainbow. (D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow, ch.16)

Text 2'':

normally after +\* very heavy rain + or something like that + and + you're driving along the road + far away like a bow + an arch + + very very far away + ah + seven colours but + + I guess you hardly ever see seven it's just a + a series of + colours which + they seem to be separate but if you try to look for the separate ... - colours they always seem + very hard + to separate + if you see what I mean + + (postgraduate student speaking informally)

\*: + refers to the pause(s) the speaker had while talking.

1- (5 minutes) Read text 1 and 2.

2- Work in groups of four or five to work out the answer for the following questions:

2.a. What is the subject matter (topic) of text 1 and 2?

(5 minutes)

2. b. 1) Do the writers of 1 and 2 use the same words, the same adjectives, the same sentence structures, etc. to make their texts fulfil the functions they have assigned for them? (5 minutes)

2) If not, show how the two texts are different, and explain why they are different. List features which make 1 and 2 different, and give examples to clarify your points. (for example think of punctuation, pauses and other features, use a grid to clarify things for yourself). (15 minutes)

| feature     | text 1 | text2 |
|-------------|--------|-------|
| punctuation |        |       |
| pauses      |        |       |

3- feedback (20 minutes)

3- The follow-up task

#### Homework (2)

Text 1:

The following is a poem by T. S. Eliot, taken from T. S. Eliot Collected Poems 1909-1962 (London, Faber and Faber, 1974), p. 229.

#### *A Note on War Poetry*

*A Note on War Poetry* was written at the request of Miss Storm Jameson, to be included in a book entitled *London Calling* (Harper Brothers, New York, 1942).

Not the expression of collective emotion  
Imperfectly reflected in the daily papers.  
Where is the point at which the merely individual  
Explosion breaks

In the path of an action merely typical  
To create the universal, originate a symbol  
Out of the impact? This is a meeting  
On which we attend

Of forces beyond control be experiment-  
Of Nature and the spirit. Mostly the individual  
Experience is too large, or too small. Our emotions  
Are only 'incidents'

In the effort to keep day and night together.  
It seems just possible that a poem might happen  
To a very young man: but a poem is not poetry-  
That is a life.

War is not a life: it is a situation,  
One which may neither be ignored nor accepted,  
A problem to be met with ambush and stratagem,  
Enveloped or scattered.

Text 2:

The following text is the first part of an American video of a  
Talking Heads song 'Once in a Lifetime', made in 1980's.

Transcript of the words from the song

And you may find yourself  
living in a shotgun shack  
and you may find yourself  
in another part of the world  
and you may find yourself  
behind the wheel of a large automobile  
and you may find yourself  
in a beautiful house  
with a beautiful wife  
and you may ask yourself  
well  
how did I get here

letting the days go by  
let the water hold me down  
letting the days go by  
water flowing underground  
into the blue again  
after the moneys gone



Once in a lifetime  
    water flowing underground

and you may ask yourself  
    how do I work this  
and you may ask yourself  
    where is that large automobile  
and you may tell yourself  
    this is not my beautiful house  
and you may tell yourself  
    this is not my beautiful wife

letting the days go by  
    let the water hold me down  
letting the days go by  
    water flowing underground  
into the blue again  
    after the moneys gone  
once in a lifetime  
    water flowing underground

same as it ever was  
same as it ever was  
same as it ever was  
same as it ever was  
same as it ever was  
same as it ever was  
same as it ever was  
same as it ever was

- Text 1 is meant to be read, text 2, however, is meant to be seen  
    and heard<sup>12</sup>. Keeping this fact in mind, try to explain why the two  
    texts are different. Think of the media used in 1 and 2 (spoken  
    versus written), and how the media dictate the form of the  
    language used: the words, sentence structure, punctuation, etc.

    Two texts were used in the homework; the first is a poem (a  
    text written to be mainly read), the second is a song in a video (a  
    text written to be sung and seen). What is required is to work out

the differences between the media used in the two texts, and their role in determining the form of language used to achieve different purposes and meet the needs of different audiences.

#### 4- The responses

##### Answers to workshop (2)

The main part in this workshop is 2.b.2. where my subjects have to list some features which make text 1 and text 2 different, and provide examples to clarify their points. The group involved in the workshop could easily work out answers to 2.a. and 2.b.1. They suggested that the two texts describe the rainbow, and they realised that the two texts have two different ways of representing the same topic. They decided that the second text is easier for them to understand than the first one for the following reasons:

| features           | text 1  | text 2  |
|--------------------|---|---|
| type of language   | language of literature<br>highly metaphorical,<br>e.g. gleamed fiercely | spoken language<br>common everyday<br>language, e.g.<br>you're        |
| text structure     | very well linked<br>no pauses   | interrupted by<br>pauses, e.g.<br>ah+ seven..++ I..                   |
| sentence structure | complete sentences,<br>e.g. And then, ..<br>..of the hill.              | unfinished<br>sentences, e.g.<br>normally after +                     |
| words              | unfamiliar, e.g.<br>iridescence, startled<br>hovering, iris, fiercely   | familiar words,<br>e.g. normally, very<br>hard, something far<br>away |

## 5- Commentary

Students' responses in general met my objectives (see pages 226 - 228). My subjects realised that, in spite of the fact that the two texts describe the same object (the rainbow), the nature of their vocabulary (familiar words in text (2) as opposed to unfamiliar words in text (1)), and type of syntax used (unfinished sentences in text (2) as opposed to complete sentences in text (1)) are different. They interpreted the difference in the range of words and structures used to the nature of the medium used in the two texts. While in the first text, it is a specialised language (the language of literature), in the second, it is informal (everyday language). Realising that text 1 and text 2 make use of two different media, and that each medium has its own characteristics - which in turn affect the way the message content is realised - would make students reconsider their use of the following: 'tear around' (text 4, appendix (10)), and 'a lot' (text (5), appendix (10)) in written texts. Since 'tear around' and 'a lot' are colloquial words, one would expect to come across them in a spoken, and not a written, utterance. In other words, exploring issues related to the media draws students' attention to the relationship between the message form and the message content, an issue current teaching methods of English fails to demonstrate to Syrian university students.

### Task (3)

#### 1- Aims of the task

Workshop (3) aims at drawing the students' attention to how information is organised, and how language is used in realising a

piece of information. In other words, a piece of discourse is presented in a series of information units. 'Information units' are those units presented by the producer of the discourse to be taken together.

in listening to much unplanned spontaneous speech that speakers produce units which are rhythmically bound together, which are not always readily relatable to syntactic constituents, but which appear to be intended by the speaker to be taken together. (Brown and Yule, 1983: 157)

The producer, however, is free to decide how s/he wishes to package the information. In other words, the producer is

free to decide where each information unit begins and ends, and how it is organised internally. (Halliday, 1967: 200)

The 'internal organisation' of the information unit relates to the way in which 'given and new information' is distributed within the unit. The producer, however, as Halliday suggests, orders 'given information' before 'new information'. 'New information' consists of information units that the addresser believes are not known to the addressee: information units that are initial in a discourse are new. 'Given information', on the other hand, consists of information units that the addresser believes to be known to the addressee. Hence, the status of information (given/new) is dictated by the producer of the discourse, and by whether or not an entity has been referred to already within the discourse. Given/new information

are options on the part of the speaker, not determined by the textual or situational environment; what is new is in the last resort what the speaker chooses to present as new, and predictions from the discourse have only a high probability of being fulfilled. (Halliday, 1967: 211)

Halliday also remarks that there is a close relationship between the realisation of the information unit phonologically, in the tone group, and syntactically, in the clause. Since this study focuses only on writing, as has been stated earlier, I am going to discuss briefly how information is realised syntactically (in writing) and not phonologically (in speech). In English, new information is characteristically introduced by indefinite expressions and subsequently referred to by definite expressions. The syntactic forms which are discussed in the literature are in association with 'given information'. They include:

(1) (1.1.) lexical units which are mentioned for the second time as in the following:

- Yesterday I saw a little girl get bitten by a dog.
- I tried to catch the dog, but it ran away. (Chafe, 1972: 52)

(1.2.) lexical units which are presented as being within the semantic field of a previously mentioned lexical unit as in the following:

- Mary got some picnic supplies out of the car.
- The beer was warm. (Haviland and Clark, 1974: 515)

(2) (2.1.) pronominals used anaphorically following a full lexical form in the preceding sentence as in the following:

- What happened to the jewels?
- They were stolen by a customer. (Van Dijk, 1977: 120)

(2.2.) pronominals used exophorically (to refer to the physical context of situation) where the referent is present, as in the following:

- Look out.
- It's falling. (Carpenter and Just, 1977: 236)

(2.3.) pro-verbals as in the following:

- William works in Manchester.
- So do I. (Allerton, 1975: 219)

All the above examples explore how information is packaged within such small structures and, particularly, what resources are available to writers for indicating to their addressees the status of information which is introduced into the discourse, as well as how the message expressed is to be understood (see Quirk and Greenbaum, 1973: 406 - 429, Huddleston, 1984: 437 - 470, Taglicht, 1984: 1 - 31).

To sum up, workshop (3) focuses on the role of language in coding information: how generic references and specific references can be manipulated within the structure of sentences for different kinds of prominence. It aims to make students' aware of language as a sequentially organised communication system, in which ordering and placing of information units may be important for the proper understanding of the message and its implications.

## 2- The task

### workshop (3)

#### Text 1:

- 1- After writing he would go to bed, smiling, waiting for tomorrow, for what God would send him to copy.
- 2- When he got home he would sit at table and quickly eat his soup, followed by beef and onions.

- 3- And if there were not any papers to copy for the office, he would make a copy for his own pleasure.
- 4- No one had ever seen him at a party.
- 5- He never noticed the taste; he ate it with flies or whatever might be in it.
- 6- He never thought of another way of amusing himself.
- 7- Then he would copy the papers he had brought with him from the office.

Text 2:

- 1- She took the garbage down to the street every morning, and carried water upstairs, stopping at every floor to get some rest.
- 2- She washed the dishes, breaking her red nails on the bottoms of dirty pots.
- 3- She came to know all the heavy house duty, the ugly work of the kitchen.
- 4- She dressed like a working-class woman, and went to the grocer's and the butcher's, with her basket on her arm.
- 5- She washed shirts and other clothes and spread them on a line to dry.
- 6- She came to bargain for every penny she had to spend.

Work in groups of 4 - 5.

- Text 1 is taken from The Overcoat by Nikolai Gogol. Text 2 is taken from The Necklace by Guy De Maupassant. Sentences in both texts are jumbled up.

- 1- spend 15 minutes re-arranging the seven sentences of text 1 to

form a coherent text\* (take a note of all the kinds of evidence you used to help you decide on a particular order rather than another).

2- spend another 15 minutes re-arranging the six sentences of text 2, and also keep a note of what you did to reconstruct the text.

\*: A text has coherence if it is a series of sentences that are well related to one another in order to form a meaningful whole.

3- The follow-up task

#### Homework (3)

Text 1:

The following text is taken from The Trouble by J.E. Powers

I went to the window. The sun was going down. I saw Grandmother<sup>1</sup> going out of the building. She<sup>2</sup> crossed the narrow street and went into the grocery-store. There was a lot of noise coming from the end of the street. But the street itself was empty. As Grandmother<sup>3</sup> came out of the grocery-store with something in a brown bag<sup>4</sup>, the noise grew louder. It came nearer and nearer. Then I saw many white men - about fifty - chasing two negroes. One of the white men was blowing a bugle as the white people do when they go fox-hunting. I looked down on the street quickly to see if Grandmother<sup>5</sup> had come inside. I found that she<sup>6</sup> had, for she<sup>7</sup> was not there. The negroes ran between two buildings, and the white men ran after them. Then the narrow street was quiet again. Grandmother<sup>8</sup> stepped out and I watched her<sup>9</sup> pick out the brown bag<sup>10</sup> that she<sup>11</sup> had dropped when she<sup>12</sup> had been hurrying to get inside the building.

Another big noise made her<sup>13</sup> drop it<sup>14</sup> again. A group of



negroes rushed out of one side of the narrow street like wild cows. Grandmother<sup>15</sup> quickly ran inside our building dropping the brown bag<sup>16</sup> once more.

1- The numbered words refer back either to the grandmother or the brown bag. Decide which ones refer to the grandmother and which ones refer to the bag, specify the numbers.

2- Explain why the numbered words (referring to the grandmother and the bag) are placed in this order. Can you change their order? If not, explain why.

Text 2:

Text 2 is a student's answer to the following question:

- Write a well organised essay of about 250 words on the following topic:

Tell the story of a film you saw and enjoyed.

Love in a great meaning in this life. Love is a relationship between Man and woman. Love is a beautiful word lives in our hearts. last year I saw a beautiful film, and I still remember it until now, the film discussed the meaning of love.

she was a beautiful woman, lived with her family in a beautiful house, and every person in her family loved her, she called randa, she loved a man worked teachers' school But she couldn't offer love to him, he came her every day and stood many hours. But she didn't tell him any word about love. she didn't define her feeling towards him, the year was passed and one day a man visited them in the house he called john. he admired with her beatiful, and she admired with

him, and after many time she began to forgot the first Man who loved her very much. the man who offered her love, helping, admiration, she forget him as nothing in her life, and married with john and left. her love because john had a money to life happy. But she failed in her marriage life. and began to suffer from her husband, she tried to return the relationship between her and her first love, But the man refused That thing, and asked her to live with her husband and offered him love to achieve her happy life. But she couldn't live with her husband so she killed herself.

in the last I find that the story was very beatiful because it offered to me the meaning of love, and we must to put one purpose before our eyes, and forget every thing. we must not to forget our hope for money, because money will finish. And the love will still at the end.

- 3.a. Is text 2 as coherent as text 1. (by coherent I mean ideas fit together well so that it is clear and easy to understand them). If not, explain why. Look for grammatical errors in text 2. Is it the grammatical errors which are affecting the quality of the text, or other factors? Specify.
- 3.b. Re-write the above text correcting as many as you can of the grammatical mistakes (ignore other kinds of errors). If text 2 is grammatically correct, will this mean that it is coherent?
- 3.c. Re-write (correct) the above text to make it sound more coherent than it is. (delete some sentences, change the order of some others, use linking words, etc., do whatever you think is appropriate).

The homework is divided into two parts: the first part is similar to the workshop. There is a text, but the text is not jumbled up; and students have to explain how items referring to the grandmother and the brown bag are linked into each other. The second part is an essay written by a student at Damascus university, and subjects are asked to compare this essay with the above text in terms of connectivity. Are parts of the second text well connected to each other like the first one. If not, why. Is it because of the grammatical problems in the text, or other problems. Therefore I asked my subjects to re-write the text twice. The first time, they are asked to correct only the grammatical errors and see if the problem with the text can be sorted out. If the problem was not solved, this means writing grammatical sentences is not enough to make the text coherent. The second time, they are asked to re-write the text to do whatever changes they think they are necessary. Being critical of someone's writing helps students in reaching conclusions about how failure in organising information units could lead to a breakdown in communication.

#### 4- The responses

##### Answers to question 1

Four different answers were given to question 1

| answer 1<br>(group 1) | answer 2<br>(group 2) | answer 3<br>(group 3) | answer 4<br>(group 4) |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 2                     | 4                     | 6                     | 2                     |
| 5                     | 6                     | 4                     | 5                     |
| 7                     | 2                     | 2                     | 7                     |
| 3                     | 5                     | 5                     | 3                     |

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | 7 | 7 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |

Answer 1

Group 1 chose 2 to be the first because they viewed the text as a description of 'the Clerk' at home. He is, then, at home having his meal. Following 2, 5 comes next because it refers back to the taste of the soup which is first mentioned in 2. After eating, he will start copying (working), and so 7 should come after 5 ('then' marks the change of action). 7 is followed by 3 since 3 starts with 'and' to link the two sentences together. Moreover, the phrase 'any papers to copy for the office' refers back to what he has already started in 7. From 3, one can conclude that he is so keen on working to the degree that he thinks that working is the only way he can amuse himself, and hence 6 follows 3. 4 should follow 6 since in 6 there is a reference to ways of amusement and going to a party is one way of amusing oneself. 6 and 4 are a comment on his life style in general, and now the writer of the text wants to go back to the original description of him at home. He had his meal, he copied some papers, and then he will go to bed; and so 1 is the last sentence.

While presenting the sequence of sentences in text 1, group 1 talked about ways of referring back to items which are already mentioned; they are: 1) exact repetition of words: e.g.: 'copy' in 7 and 3, 2) substitution of a word by a pronoun, e.g.: 'soup' in 2 is substituted by 'it' in 5.

### Answer 2

Group 2 thought that sentence no. 4 should be the first because they wanted to start with a general statement about 'the clerk' (that he does not go to parties). The implication of this sentence is that he is not keen on enjoying himself at all; hence no. 6 should come after 4. To clarify 4 and 6, one needs more details about his life. We had a description of him arriving home eating, working, and then sleeping. 2 should come after 6 because at this stage, the writer wanted to start talking about his life (He is at home, having his meal). 5 should follow 2 because it states how he does not notice the taste or whatever might be in his meal. After finishing his meal, he will start working, since he is keen on working as has been mentioned earlier on. This means 7 has to follow 5. 7 should be followed by 3 because 3 states how after finishing what he has to copy for the office, he will start writing copying for his own interest. To him, working and mainly copying is the only way he could amuse himself. Finally, after eating and working he goes to bed. This means sentence no. 1 is the last sentence.

### Answer 3

Answer 3 with the exception of the first sentence is an exact copy of answer 2, i.e. group 3 sequenced their sentences, or more specifically, organised their information units in a way similar to that of group 2.

#### Answer 4

Similarly, answer 4 with the exception of sentence no. 1 is an exact copy of answer 1. Briefly, group 1 and group 4 had similar ways of packaging their information units.

#### Answers to question 2

Four different answers were given to question 2. However, for the sake of brevity, I am not going to provide them.

#### 5- Commentary

It is interesting to note that in all the four answers, 2 and 5, 7 and 3, 6 and 4 are grouped together. In other words, all the groups noticed: (1) that 2 and 5 are about 'the clerk' having the soup, and not noticing the taste of the soup, (2) that 7 and 3 are about copying papers, (3) that 6 and 4 are about ways of amusement. If two sentences are related to the same semantic field, they have to be presented together, i.e. they follow each other.

Besides, the fact that four different answers were given shows that four different packagings of information are presented to achieve four different kinds of prominence. This remark makes students aware of the fact that the same piece of information can be realised syntactically in different ways to achieve different functions: interpreting the writer's intended meaning is dependent on the ordering and placing of information units. In other words, students explored issues related to information structure: which parts of the message the writer assumes the reader knows and which parts of the message are new information. Exploring issues of new

and given information would be useful to students number 3 and 5 who failed to realise new entities (see appendix (3), and Chapter Four, page 141), and to students number 1 and 2 who failed to use unambiguous back references (see appendix (5), and Chapter Four, pages 142 - 143).

#### 5.3.3.2. Field-related workshops

Workshops (4) and (5) have not been carried out, hence the following section does not include any responses or any commentary. However, the reason I have designed them is to give Syrian university teachers as well the reader some examples of field-related workshops.

#### Task (4)

##### 1- Aims of the task

Workshop (4) is intended for students of the Faculty of Arts and Social Science. It seeks to draw students' attention to different techniques one can use while writing, and how one can relate such techniques to other factors such as the audience, the writer's aim, etc. For instance, I want students to examine carefully how text 1 criticises Lady Bracknell and in turn the upper class, for whom she stands. To achieve his purpose effectively, Wilde throughout the play makes Lady Bracknell put on a very formal register (register is defined earlier on, see pages 217 - 219) which she uses all the time regardless of changes in the relationship between herself and the addressee, and changes of context.

2- The task

Workshop (4)

Text 1:

Lady Bracknell: Well, I must say, Algernon, that I think it is high time that Mr Bunbury made up his mind whether he was going to live or to die. This shilly-shallying with the question is absurd. Nor do I in any way approve of the modern sympathy with invalids. I consider it morbid. Illness of any kind is hardly a thing to be encouraged in others. Health is the primary duty of life. I am always telling that to your poor uncle, but he never seems to take much notice ... as far as any improvement in his ailment goes. I should be much obliged if you would ask Mr Bunbury, from me, to be kind enough not to have a relapse on Saturday, for I rely on you to arrange my music for me. It is my last reception, and one wants something that will encourage conversation, particularly at the end of the season when everyone has practically said whatever they had to say, which, in most cases, was probably not much.

Text 1 is taken from Oscar Wilde's The Importance Of Being Earnest (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1954), p. 262.

Work in groups of four or five, remember to appoint a spokesperson.

1- (5 minutes) Read text 1.

2- (10 minutes) What points is Lady Bracknell trying to raise in her speech?

3- (10 minutes) What register did Lady Bracknell use while talking to Algernon who is a cousin to the family? Give examples from the text to support your decision.



4- (15 minutes) The register used by Lady Bracknell was decided for her by Wilde. Why did Wilde choose this register and not any other form? Is it because it suits the content of situation, or the relationship between Lady Bracknell and Algernon, or some other reason? Discuss and come to a decision. (Remember, Lady Bracknell uses the same form of register throughout the play while addressing all characters).

3- The follow-up task

#### Homework (4)

- 1- Pick up a text you read before and choose one paragraph or a passage from that text.
- 2- Re-read the passage you decided to select for this homework.
- 3- examine the form of language used in this passage. think of the relationship between the passage and:
  - the purpose of the text (what is the main objective behind the text itself)
  - the writer of the text
  - the audience (to whom it is addressed),

#### Task (5)

1- Aims of the task

One of the reasons for learning academic English is to gain skills in different types of writing task such as writing summaries, descriptions of machines, and reports (see needs identified in diagram (2.8.), p. 49). However, different writing tasks involve different writing techniques and different ways of organising

information. Hence, workshop (5) is intended for Syrian university students of the Faculty of Science to give them experience, as well as some training in writing skills they are expected to be competent in. Analysing and understanding how a given writing task is realised draw students' attention to generalisations about the nature of academic language which they can apply in their own writing. To meet one's intended outcomes, one should expose students to appropriate practices: an issue current methods of teaching English in Syria fails to fulfil.

## 2- The task

### Workshop (5)

#### Text 1:

Mercury, the smallest planet, and the one closest to the sun, is difficult to see. Certainly it is necessary to choose the right evening. On occasions the planet can appear as a bright spot low down near the horizon. Under favourable conditions it may be visible for as long as an hour at dawn or dusk.

To the ancient Greeks, Mercury was the swift messenger of the gods. We are told that in his youth he always managed to hide his movements and so to avoid being found out. This name is suitable for this fast-moving little planet that so often escapes detection.

Mercury can never appear more than  $28^{\circ}$  from the sun, and its greatest distance may sometimes be as little as  $18^{\circ}$ . Good conditions are therefore necessary if we are to see it without the help of a telescope. The best times occur in the spring shortly after sunset, and in the early morning during the autumn; but clear skies near the

horizon are often rare, and many amateur observers have never seen Mercury. They are in good company, for we are told that Copernicus never succeeded in seeing it.

Text 1 is taken from A. E. Fanning's The Planet Mercury, p. 56 - 57, in English For Secondary School, Book Two scientific (Damascus, The Department Of School Books For The Ministry Of Education, 1967).

- Work in groups of 4 or 5, appoint a spokesperson.

1- (10 minutes) Read text 1.

2- (10 minutes) What are the main ideas in text 1? Write an outline for text 1.

3- (10 minutes) Write a summary for text 1 depending on your outlines, and your understanding of the text.

3- The follow-up task

#### Homework (5)

- Pick a chapter from one of your scientific books.

- Re-read it.

- Write a summary of this chapter. (200 words)

#### 5.4. Conclusions

The rationale behind introducing workshops is to engage students in activities through which they learn more effectively; in particular,

(1) how to free themselves from their teachers. Instead of relying completely on teachers' presentation of information, for example telling them how different media dictate different ways of

organising information (i.e. listing some features which distinguish speech from writing), learners can work out the role of media in communication by analysing and examining text 1 and text 2 of task (2).

(2) how to develop personal responses. Working out things for themselves, learners will see the discussion not as an end in itself, but as the beginning of further investigation. In other words, they are motivated to be analytical and critical. The fact that four different answers are given to question 1 of task (3) suggests that the four groups involved sequenced their sentences in different ways. Each group had their own reasons for selecting a specific organisation. Briefly, the four different packagings of information are meant to achieve four different kinds of prominence.

(3) how to motivate themselves to learn by making things interesting and more memorable. Being involved, and not passive recipients, in the action of exploring information makes learning more interesting and more memorable. For instance, instead of advising students to use language appropriately, demonstrating the variation in a person's writing according to the type of situation, and to the person or persons addressed with examples (texts 1 and 2 of task (1)), which students analyse, would make learning more interesting.

(4) how to examine the context as well as the content of the activities in relation to the tasks required to be done. While examining text 3 of task (1), my subjects realise that the content of the letter, or more specifically, the language of the

second paragraph is not appropriate to the particular situation used for (addressing Ms Carter formally). Accordingly, the students involved reach the following conclusion that the secretary (or whoever wrote the letter) fails to match the language of the second paragraph to the purpose of the text.

(5) how to discuss things with their classmates in the class and outside the class, instead of being completely dependent on teachers and therefore discussing everything mainly with them. Discussing things with their classmates also means that they learn from each other. All the above tasks involve working in pairs or in groups. Working in pairs means that students negotiate things together to solve the particular issues raised by the task. Moreover, all the tasks allocate sometime for feedback. Keeping some time for feedback gives students the chance to report to each other their results and so they can learn from each other's findings.

The workshops outlined in sections 5.3.3.1. and 5.3.3.2. suggest that composition teaching can usefully be re-oriented more towards realising the communicative function of utterances. As suggested in Chapter Four, the problems my Syrian subjects face are due primarily to the nature of current teaching materials and teaching practices, which mainly focus on grammatical correctness rather than appropriateness. Activities related to the teaching of writing, unlike drilling or structural reinforcement, explore the use of language in context, and show how texts are affected by the nature of the relationship between the addresser and addressee. Other considerations are also raised by the above workshops,

including how the writer's objectives determine the type of register used, and determine the order of information . In other words, since the poor quality of Syrian university students' writing is the result of particular pedagogical methods and attitudes to language teaching, the problem is less a linguistic one, than a cognitive one. By cognitive, in this context, I am not referring to Kaplan's claim of cognitive differences between speakers of different languages which, he believes, are due to the influence of the mother tongue on cognition (Kaplan, 1966), see discussion on pages 171 - 173. Rather, I mean that since students are trained to focus on grammatical realisations of their utterances, they are led to believe that to write means to focus on grammatical correctness and not interactional aspects of writing (e.g. the communicative function of utterances). This fact is reinforced by the letters the group of the Syrians wrote giving their opinions of writing (see discussion on pages 148 - 150).

Having outlined aspects of a new approach to teaching writing and suggested some appropriate activities, I move to discuss the way assessment of writing is currently viewed and carried out within the Syrian context; I examine its influence on students' performance. This is the subject matter of the next chapter.

## Notes

1. Medicine Book 1 is prepared by English Language Services (London, Collier-Macmillan International, 1966)
2. Kernel Lessons Intermediate Students' Book is prepared by R. O'Neill, et al (London, Longman, 1971)
3. English Texts In Sociology is edited by Abdul Hamid Al-Hassan (Damascus, Al-Jadidah Printing Press, 1983)
4. Example (1) is taken from an essay written by a Syrian student.
5. The prescribed steps are adapted from Durant and Fabb (1987), and from discussion with Durant and Fabb of the functions of workshops, as well as my participation in leading some of the workshops, of the 'Ways Of Reading' Class at the University of Strathclyde.
6. This list is adopted from Munby's Communicative Syllabus Design: A Sociolinguistic Model for Defining The Content Of Purpose-specific Language Programmes (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978)
7. Text 1 of workshop (1) is a photocopy of an invitation card I received from the University of Strathclyde to attend the Welcome Ceremony.
8. With the exception of the second paragraph, text 3 of workshop (1) is taken from Intermediate Composition Practice, Book 1, A Text For students Of English As A Second Language, by Linda Lonon Blanton (Rowely, Newbury House Publishers, 1981), p. 105.
9. The answers do not show any disagreement among students, however, this is not common in workshops.
10. Text 1 of workshop 2 is by D.H. Lawrence, in Discourse Analysis

by G. Brown and G. Yule (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 18.

11. Text 2 of workshop 2 is taken from Discourse Analysis by G. Brown and G. Yule (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 18.

12. The subjects involved in workshop (2) and homework (2) saw the video of text (2) of the homework. Providing students with a transcript of the words of the song (text (2)) is not enough to work out the differences between text (1) and text (2).



## CHAPTER SIX

### Approaches To The Assessment of Students' Writing

#### 6.0. Introduction

This chapter outlines a schedule for assessing writing consistent with the new teaching approaches proposed in Chapter Five, and linked to a critical description of the ways in which writing is currently assessed in Syrian university classes. To this end, the chapter starts by providing relevant background information to clarify the ambiguous term 'assessment' (Rowntree, 1987), and to contextualise my approach to assessment in relation to existing work in the field. The chapter then moves on:

- (1) to draw a comparison of the performances of two groups (group 1 and group 2 represented in appendix (11) and appendix (12)) to find out how consistent the marking scheme (adopted by Syrian university teachers) is with regard to decisions on students' final 'product'.
- (2) to analyse marks and comments by ten Syrian and ten British teachers, re-marking and commenting on identical compositions: differences in teachers' expectations could result in a diversity in the nature of comments, as well as in the range of marks.

Following Hillocks's results (1982), (which demonstrate that activities which precede writing are more powerful in causing effective change than the assignment alone), and Gee's (1972), Taylor and Hoedt's (1966), Stevens's (1973) and Hausner's (1975) studies (which show that teachers' comments on students'

compositions have little effect on the quality of their writings), my analysis highlights aspects of arbitrariness and idiosyncrasy in marking, and argues in general that marking is an unreliable mode of assessment of writing which undermines student progress.

#### 6.1. Perspectives on 'assessment' from existing work in the field

In his discussion of the term 'assessment', Rowntree (1987) suggests that one way of clarifying the use of the term is to distinguish between assessment, evaluating, grading, marking, testing, and examining students. Tests and examination are possible means of assessment, and so grades and marks are possible outcomes. Evaluation is an attempt to identify and explain the effectiveness of teaching; hence assessment is a necessary component of evaluation. Scriven (1967) distinguishes between formative evaluation and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation is intended

to develop and improve a piece of teaching until it is as effective as it can be. (Rowntree, 1987: 7)

Summative evaluation, however, is

intended to establish the effectiveness of the teaching once it is fully developed and in regular use. (Rowntree, 1987: 7)

Applying Scriven's distinction to assessment, Rowntree calls assessment which is directed towards identifying students' strength and weakness formative assessment, and assessment which is directed to assess the final outcomes of students' performance summative assessment. Formative assessment is diagnostic, in that it measures someone's present achievements or delineates her/his present

weakness; for this reason it is not graded. Diagnostic assessment does not have to take the form of tests or examinations. Since it appraises an image of the student, and perhaps of the teacher, and the teaching methods, it does not test a student's intrinsic abilities. Joan Tough (1976) distinguishes between testing and appraisal. While testing is a procedure for measuring ability, knowledge, or performance, appraisal describes what the learner is like: what skills s/he knows and does not know.

By contrast, summative assessment is represented in tests and examinations at the end of a period of academic study. It assesses students' final product or output at the end, for example, of the year. Summative assessment is sometimes referred to as 'classificatory' assessment, since it classifies students' achievement into different categories. Both summative assessment and formative assessment are, then, used for specific and different purposes (see Hudson (1973), Breland and Gaynor (1979), Gannon (1985), and White (1985)).

## 6.2. Assessment in Syria: principles and practice of marking written English

Having to some extent clarified different uses of the term 'assessment', I present a critical description of the ways in which writing is currently assessed in Syrian university classes. The proposal for a new schedule of assessment depends on appropriate modes of assessing writing, linked to the ways in which writing is currently assessed and the change in the focus outlined in Chapter Five.

Assessment within the Syrian educational system focuses mainly on the correctness of the grammatical realisations of linguistic structure in the final submitted product i.e. students are judged according to the quality and quantity of the grammatical errors they make. In other words, teachers within this framework - the traditional method - assess surface features of language; other considerations, such as the effectiveness of communication or language use, are not their concern. Teachers fail completely to assess many aspects of the quality of students' writing; nor do they give judgements on the way the topic is presented, or on the way ideas are arranged in sentences.

Assessors of writing in Syria concentrate on the surface structure of the work presented because, as has been argued at length above, they assume that knowledge of English grammar by itself is enough to produce students who are competent in writing. Certainly, students must have a basic linguistic competence in order to write; but, as Chapters Three and Four have shown, grammatical proficiency alone does not mean writing ability. This view is not unique to the Syrian educational system; it is held by other systems which have adopted the traditional method of language teaching.

for over a century teachers had been teaching grammar and expecting, indeed assuming, that it would help their students write better. (O'Hare, 1973: 6)

A grammatical approach to the teaching of writing assumes, of course, that competence in grammar and competence in writing are synonymous; that learning to control grammar is the key to learning to write.

### 6.2.1. Assessment, teaching methods and learning strategies

Assessment, within the Syrian framework, seems to have a determining influence on teaching methods. It turns teaching methods mainly into a concern with exams and exam techniques. In other words, the major purpose of teaching becomes that of helping students to pass, or providing students with techniques which can assist them in passing their examinations. In his comment on the unsuitability of 'O' level examinations in English language in Africa and Asia, Jones (1967) remarks:

Worse still is the influence of the examination upon teaching, since it works against the adoption of properly efficient techniques of second language teaching. (in Harrison, 1973: 102)

Syrian teachers' comments could result in a concern for the grammatical problems which need to be attended to before problems with the argument of the text is attended to, i.e. grammaticality is assumed to be a set of rules for composing. Teachers' assessment, then, is viewed as an end in itself: teachers see their job as a way of helping students to pass exams, and fulfilling the narrow requirements set for them by the Ministry of Higher Education.

The traditional approach to language teaching may also have a harmful influence on learning strategies. On the futility of teaching traditional grammar, Harris suggests that formal grammar has a 'negligible or even a harmful effect upon the correctness of writing' (in Braddock et al, 1963: 83). In her research, Sommers (1982) also suggests that

*teachers' comments can take students' attention away from their own purposes in writing a*

*particular text and focus that attention on the teachers' purpose in commenting.* (p. 149, her italics)

Students usually take the teachers' comments literally because they want to pass the exam; they therefore try to meet teachers expectations, those of grammaticality.

Students concentrate more ... on what the teachers commanded them to do than on what they are trying to say. (Sommers, 1982: 151)

Syrian students are encouraged to believe that writing is a *product* which has to pass an examination on the strength of its grammatical realisation. Even judged against this criterion, nevertheless, as Chapter Three has shown, the Syrian educational system fails to achieve its intended outcome insofar as Syrian university students still have serious grammatical errors. This failure to achieve the intended outcome is partly related to the fact that, in most cases, students get no feedback on their developing performance in English. All they get is a mark; or else they are informed simply whether they have passed or failed the exam. In other words, students do not know their strengths and weaknesses at a time when they can react profitably to this information, and so they are uncertain whether their learning strategies are efficient enough or not. Even if they wish to modify their learning strategies, they do not know what to change, or what to develop.

Focusing on the grammaticality of the final submitted products of students' studies, thus, detracts from the following areas of educational potential interest in the process of assessment:

(1) Assessment can be used as a mean to encourage students'

curiosity about knowledge, encouraging them to look for information, and motivating them to learn and develop their own learning strategies (see Lees (1979), and Cardelle and Corno (1981)).

(2) Assessment can be seen as a way of reporting back continuously on students' achievement. It draws the attention of students to their strengths and weaknesses, relative to agreed course objectives; and so shows or tells them how to avoid weak points in their performance, and encourages them to carry on using and to develop good points. So assessment may help students modify their learning techniques. This kind of assessment can be represented in the form of verbal and written comments, or through the use of programmed texts (programmed texts are usually designed for the teaching of a specific subject matter which is usually presented as an ordered sequence of items, each of which requires a response from the learner. S/he, then compares her/his response with the correct response which is provided), see Belanger and Rodgers (1983), and Sommers ((1980) and (1982)).

### 6.3. Assessment, grammaticality and the writings of Syrian students: a case study

#### 6.3.1. Description of data

To highlight aspects of inconsistency, arbitrariness and idiosyncrasy in marking, and argue in general that marking - as a way of measuring the student's ability to use 'communicative competence' (Hymes, 1972), and inferring how successful s/he is in

manipulating her/his knowledge of sociolinguistic as well as grammatical rules (see page 209) - is an unreliable mode of assessment of writing which undermines student progress, the following data is examined:

- (1) Performances of two groups: group 1 and group 2 represented in appendix (11) and appendix (12). Appendix (11) consists of ten essays, written by second year university students in the Department of English Studies, which failed the exam (texts were originally marked by a Syrian teacher). Appendix (12) consists of ten essays written by second year university students in the Department of English studies, which passed the exam (texts were originally marked by a Syrian teacher). The marks awarded to texts represented in appendixes (11) and (12) are presented in table (6.7.), see pages 271 - 272. The marking scheme followed in marking these submitted final products focuses mainly on the quality and quantity of the grammatical errors made.
- (2) Texts represented in appendixes (11) and (12) were then given to another group of teachers for re-marking: ten Syrian teachers and ten British teachers. No specific instructions were given to the teachers involved as a deliberate way of finding out if the teachers were interested in getting any feedback on the criteria of marking. Thus, if teachers did not ask for details of the range of factors in the writing they are supposed to be looking for, this fact, in turn, contributes to the arbitrariness of marking, i.e. teachers presume that they know what is required from them. All that is given is the total mark: 60, and the pass



mark: 30. The teachers involved in the re-marking were also asked to comment on students' performance to pinpoint weaknesses, see appendixes (13), (14), (15), and (16). The reason I had two groups of markers is that I am interested in whether British teachers' expectations of a piece of student writing differ from those of Syrian teachers.

### 6.3.2. Analysis of data

#### 6.3.2.1. Assessment and consistency

As has been suggested above, assessors of writing in Syria, tend to concentrate mainly on grammaticality; they, therefore, suppose that writing in English aims to test students' command of language (grammatical forms), and not:

- (1) the students' knowledge or understanding of the subject (content)
- (2) the manner in which students interpret or analyse a certain topic; the style in which they choose to represent it.

As a result, sometimes students pass the exam even if they have what can appear to be serious problems with the content or the style, as in example (1):

- (1) But after that wife became bregnant, she becam to treat her as if she was a servant in the house. She was always asking her to do a lot of work in the house, cleaning, cooking, and shopping, but before her father came back to the house she was always asking her to talk a bath and to sit besid him and not to do any work. (student 13, see appendix (12))

In this example, there are a range of difficulties, many of which

seem to fall outside the scope of 'grammatical' assessment, at least as this is likely to be defined in the Syrian context. For instance, one of the difficulties is related to back referencing: the pronoun 'she' is ambiguous. It is not clear whether 'she' refers back to the pregnant lady or the other girl. The issue of content organisation and failure to convey the intended meaning has been discussed earlier on (see Chapter Four).

Not only do passing students have problems with style and/or content; but also they make serious grammatical errors, e.g. students no. 11, 18 and 19 (see appendix (12)). From table (6.1.), one can see that although student no. 11 had 5 agreement errors, and 3 errors with zero forms; student no. 18 had also 3 agreement errors, and 2 zero errors; student no. 19 had 3 agreement errors, 3 errors with the article, and 2 errors with zero forms, yet they still passed the exam. From this fact, I conclude that even the narrow grammaticality measure is not reliable, nor consistent.

Table (6.1.)

(Table (6.1.) gives my analysis of errors underlined by the teacher for essays in appendix (12), essays 11 - 20)

| type of error            | number of essays<br>(numbers are used instead of names) |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|--------------------------|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|                          | 11  | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| spelling                 | 3   | 5  | 11 | 2  | 3  | 1  | 2  | 1  | 10 | 1  |
| incorrect prep.          |   |    |    |    |    | 1  |    | 1  | 2  | 2  |
| unnecessary prep.        |   |    |    | 1  |    |    |    |    | 1  | 2  |
| agreement                | 5   |    |    |    | 1  |    | 1  | 3  | 3  | 1  |
| wrong part of sp.        | 2   | 2  |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1  |    |
| wrong expression         |   | 1  | 1  |    | 1  | 1  | 1  |    | 2  |    |
| zero form                | 3   |    |    |    |    |    |    | 2  | 2  |    |
| missing art.             |   |    | 1  |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| unnecessary art.         |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 3  | 1  |
| wrong tense              |   |    | 1  |    |    |    |    | 1  |    |    |
| tense sequence           |   |    |    |    | 1  |    |    |    |    |    |
| incorrect form           | 1   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| capital letter           |   |    |    |    |    |    | 1  |    |    |    |
| unnecessary are          | 2   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| wrong word               | 2   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| passive                  | 1   |    | 1  |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| unnecessary comma        |   | 1  |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| missing verb             |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1  |    |
| missing relative pronoun |   | 1  |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |

## 6.3.2.2. Assessment and arbitrariness

Group 1 (whose performance is represented in appendix (11)) failed the exam because they had a high frequency of some grammatical errors, e.g.: agreement and zero form, see table (6.2.):

## Table (6.2.)

(Table (6.2.) gives my analysis of errors underlined by the teacher for essays in appendix (11), essays 1 - 10)<sup>2</sup>

| type of error     | number of essays (numbers are used instead of names) |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|-------------------|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
|                   | 1  | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| spelling          | 9  | 7 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2  |
| incorrect prep.   | 1  |   |   |   | 2 |   | 1 |   |   |    |
| unnecessary prep. |  | 1 | 1 |   | 1 |   |   | 1 |   | 2  |
| agreement         | 1  | 2 | 1 | 6 |   | 6 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5  |
| wrong part of sp. | 3  |   |   |   | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 |    |
| wrong expression  | 1  |   | 1 | 1 | 1 |   |   |   | 1 | 1  |
| zero form         | 3  | 3 |   |   | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 |   |    |
| missing art.      |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| unnecessary art.  |  |   |   |   | 1 |   | 1 |   |   |    |
| wrong tense       | 2  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| tense sequence    |  | 1 |   | 1 |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| incorrect form    |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| capital letter    |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| unnecessary 'are' |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| wrong word        | 1  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |

|                             |   |   |   |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|
| passive<br>necessary        | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| unnecessary<br>passive      |   |   | 1 |
| unnecessary comma           | 1 |   |   |
| missing verb                |   |   |   |
| missing relative<br>pronoun |   | 2 | 3 |
| unnecessary pl.             |   |   |   |
| subject missing             | 1 |   |   |
| verb missing                |   | 3 | 1 |
| incorrect aux.              | 1 |   |   |
| unnecessary noun            | 1 |   |   |
| wrong form                  |   | 1 |   |
| unnecessary<br>possessive   |   |   | 1 |

An examination of appendixes (11) and (12), and tables (6.1.) and (6.2.) shows that the assessors' measurements are not consistent, in that in the case of group 2 some students had serious grammatical errors which are identical with those in group 1. It seems, then, that the marks given are very arbitrary and idiosyncratic. If measurements are not consistent, then different students would be likely to pass the exam if the marking was carried out by different teachers or at a different time. Thus, student no. 11 had 30 which is a pass (see table (6.7.)). However, when his paper was re-marked, all the marks he got were below the pass mark, i.e. he failed (see table (6.4.)). On the other hand, student no. 8 had 10 which is a failure (see table (6.7.)). However, when his paper was re-marked,

he was given five pass marks (40, 30, 32, 42, 30), see table (6.5.).

To test the arbitrary character of marking, the twenty papers referred to in appendix (11) and appendix (12) were given to another group of teachers for re-marking: ten Syrian teachers and ten British teachers. As has been mentioned earlier on (see pages 263 - 264) no specific instructions were given to the teachers involved. Interestingly enough, none of the teachers was interested in getting any feedback on the criteria of marking. This shows how vague the concept of marking is.

Predictably, in the re-marking essays scored a wide range of different marks (see tables (6.3.), (6.4.), (6.5.), (6.6.) and (6.7.)).

**Table (6.3.)**

Table (6.3.) presents marks for essays 1 - 10 as marked by the Syrian teachers. Marks were awarded out of 60, the pass mark is 30.

| essay no. | markers |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|-----------|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|           | 1       | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 |
| 1         | 12      | 25 | 30 | 12 | 14 | 25 | 16 | 15 | 0  | 15 |
| 2         | 8       | 28 | 32 | 15 | 18 | 30 | 12 | 12 | 15 | 15 |
| 3         | 20      | 20 | 35 | 28 | 13 | 20 | 11 | 25 | 20 | 22 |
| 4         | 14      | 18 | 20 | 33 | 13 | 32 | 11 | 20 | 15 | 20 |
| 5         | 6       | 15 | 20 | 17 | 13 | 15 | 8  | 12 | 5  | 20 |
| 6         | 16      | 30 | 33 | 30 | 23 | 20 | 44 | 25 | 8  | 22 |
| 7         | 15      | 17 | 7  | 30 | 18 | 30 | 10 | 20 | 13 | 20 |
| 8         | 12      | 15 | 20 | 30 | 20 | 35 | 12 | 15 | 18 | 20 |
| 9         | 14      | 12 | 5  | 24 | 20 | 5  | 32 | 22 | 20 | 20 |
| 10        | 11      | 28 | 22 | 32 | 14 | 10 | 45 | 25 | 18 | 25 |

**Table (6.4.)**

Table (6.4.) presents marks for essays 11 - 20 as marked by the Syrian teachers. Marks were awarded out of 60, the pass mark is 30.

| essay no. | markers |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|-----------|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|           | 1       | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 |
| 11        | 9       | 13 | 10 | 14 | 13 | 20 | 8  | 12 | 0  | 20 |
| 12        | 25      | 20 | 14 | 40 | 25 | 30 | 30 | 35 | 17 | 25 |
| 13        | 27      | 33 | 30 | 35 | 30 | 40 | 33 | 25 | 23 | 30 |
| 14        | 28      | 30 | 25 | 43 | 34 | 45 | 52 | 30 | 30 | 30 |
| 15        | 17      | 13 | 10 | 25 | 26 | 10 | 31 | 25 | 30 | 25 |
| 16        | 29      | 19 | 13 | 35 | 16 | 10 | 28 | 25 | 30 | 27 |
| 17        | 20      | 15 | 24 | 33 | 17 | 40 | 29 | 28 | 32 | 30 |
| 18        | 15      | 15 | 11 | 20 | 14 | 15 | 27 | 25 | 24 | 20 |
| 19        | 26      | 30 | 24 | 36 | 17 | 35 | 35 | 25 | 35 | 30 |
| 20        | 13      | 16 | 23 | 39 | 28 | 35 | 40 | 35 | 35 | 30 |

**Table (6.5.)**

Table (6.5.) presents marks for essays 1 - 10 as marked by the British teachers. Marks were awarded out of 60, the pass mark is 30.

| essay no. | markers |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|-----------|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|           | 1       | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 |
| 1         | 32      | 10 | 10 | 28 | 15 | 30 | 38 | 20 | 27 | 25 |
| 2         | 40      | 12 | 15 | 27 | 20 | 36 | 41 | 20 | 26 | 26 |
| 3         | 35      | 10 | 20 | 26 | 25 | 38 | 36 | 18 | 31 | 18 |
| 4         | 45      | 15 | 20 | 23 | 27 | 29 | 36 | 20 | 30 | 21 |
| 5         | 35      | 12 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 24 | 34 | 16 | 30 | 26 |
| 6         | 33      | 12 | 20 | 23 | 24 | 29 | 40 | 21 | 25 | 15 |
| 7         | 34      | 16 | 20 | 28 | 26 | 26 | 41 | 24 | 26 | 25 |
| 8         | 40      | 12 | 20 | 30 | 20 | 32 | 42 | 24 | 30 | 29 |

|    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 9  | 30 | 15 | 10 | 23 | 22 | 24 | 32 | 10 | 26 | 17 |
| 10 | 40 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 30 | 21 | 46 | 25 | 27 | 27 |

**Table (6.6.)**

Table (6.6.) presents marks for essays 11 - 20 as marked by the British teachers. Marks were awarded out of 60, the pass mark is 30.

| essay no. | markers |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|-----------|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|           | 1       | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 |
| 11        | 12      | 10 | 20 | 15 | 27 | 17 | 35 | 16 | 30 | 25 |
| 12        | 10      | 25 | 25 | 25 | 32 | 40 | 30 | 26 | 32 | 27 |
| 13        | 25      | 25 | 33 | 27 | 32 | 30 | 42 | 32 | 34 | 30 |
| 14        | 17      | 30 | 28 | 28 | 38 | 45 | 40 | 31 | 32 | 30 |
| 15        | 10      | 10 | 10 | 10 | 25 | 26 | 30 | 22 | 25 | 20 |
| 16        | 12      | 10 | 10 | 10 | 33 | 30 | 44 | 21 | 25 | 26 |
| 17        | 13      | 12 | 15 | 13 | 30 | 28 | 46 | 28 | 24 | 22 |
| 18        | 20      | 10 | 20 | 15 | 28 | 25 | 49 | 17 | 31 | 25 |
| 19        | 22      | 15 | 27 | 20 | 37 | 28 | 45 | 32 | 30 | 32 |
| 20        | 20      | 33 | 25 | 25 | 35 | 25 | 40 | 25 | 26 | 27 |

**Table (6.7.)**

Table (6.7.) lists the original marks of the papers in question. Marks were awarded out of 60, the pass mark is 30.

| group 1            | group 2             |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| (student no. 1) 12 | (student no. 11) 30 |
| (student no. 2) 8  | (student no. 12) 26 |
| (student no. 3) 10 | (student no. 13) 26 |
| (student no. 4) 7  | (student no. 14) 36 |
| (student no. 5) 5  | (student no. 15) 23 |



|                  |    |                  |    |
|------------------|----|------------------|----|
| (student no. 6)  | 12 | (student no. 16) | 32 |
| (student no. 7)  | 20 | (student no. 17) | 32 |
| (student no. 8)  | 10 | (student no. 18) | 23 |
| (student no. 9)  | 5  | (student no. 19) | 27 |
| (student no. 10) | 14 | (student no. 20) | 28 |

When compared with the results of table (6.7.), the results in tables (6.3.), (6.4.), (6.5.) and (6.6.) indicate that marks do not give a reliable picture about students' performance. In some cases, as with essay no. 1 (see table (6.3.)), an essay can be given zero and 30 by two different markers. While zero indicates the limit of decisive failure, 30 indicates a near average. Or consider essay no. 2, see table (6.4.). In the case of an apparently 'average' essay of this type, there can be a range of marks between (8 and 32). But if the student's paper is awarded 32, this means a pass, while if the mark is 8, this means a failure. Since marks appear to be in this way arbitrary and idiosyncratic, as tables (6.3.), (6.4.), (6.5.) and (6.6.) show clearly, it appears unfair to students to take marks as the only evidence of their achievement. In the Syrian context, marks are taken to be the main, if not the only, evidence taken by the marker to decide whether to fail or pass a student.

The above results demonstrate that, even with markers of a single educational system, 'uncontrolled marking<sup>3</sup>' as a mode of assessment is:

- (1) inconsistent
- (2) arbitrary
- (3) idiosyncratic

(4) unfair to students in relation to the pass and failure distinction

(5) no feedback on learning strategies is provided.

Another point, in relation to the consistency of marking, is that students 12, 13, 15, 18, 19, and 20 all passed the composition exam, in spite of the fact that they did not get a pass mark in the main question, which has 60 out of 100 (see table (6.7.)). Since students such as 12, 13, 15, 18, 19, and 20 passed the exam, they infer that their performance is satisfactory. Concentration on grammaticality in the (final) written product of students does not, therefore, direct them towards developing their writing skills further. On the contrary, it may make them complacent if they are deceived into believing that their performances are acceptable when they still have serious grammatical errors.

Uncontrolled marking, then, is an unreliable mode of assessment of writing because it misleads students and undermines their progress. To avoid these consequences, continuous assessment could be introduced provided teachers agree on the criteria of marking, i.e. details of the range of factors in the writing they are supposed to be looking for should be stated. This proposal (continuous assessment) is linked to the change in the focus outlined in Chapter Five, task oriented language teaching. Since all tasks discussed earlier on are followed by a homework (the follow-up task), students' performance in these homeworks could be taken as a measure of their progress. In these homeworks, teachers will be looking for the specific features of language use raised by the

workshop. For instance in homework (1), Teachers' decisions should be based on how successful students are in:

- (1) using different kinds of register: perhaps formal in the first (question 1 of homework (1)), informal in the second (question 2 of homework (1))
- (2) using different layouts
- (3) selecting information: one would expect different kinds of information in each letter depending on the relationship between the addresser and the addressee.

Being clear about what features one is looking for in a piece of writing means that marking will not be arbitrary, nor inconsistent.

#### 6.3.2.3. Teachers' comments, learning strategies and the quality of students' writing

One of the reasons that this kind of marking is an inefficient mode of assessment follows from the fact that marks are not accompanied by comments, or feedback on students' performance. If students were to receive comments similar to those provided in the above experiment (see appendixes (13), (14), (15), and (16), would this be beneficial? Or, more specifically, do comments provide students with useful feedback on their performance, in turn helping them to modify their learning strategies to improve the quality of their writing?

One potential problem with teachers' comments is the fact that they can be too general; they could be applied equally to any text.

teachers' comments are not text-specific and could be interchanged, rubber-stamped, from text to

text. (Sommers, 1982: 152)

In the comments provided by both British and Syrian teachers who took part in my re-marking experiment, one characteristic was that they were not specific, see the following:

- very very weak grammar (marker 1, see appendix (16))
- a bad composition (marker 2, see appendix (16))
- it is written with very weak style (marker 3, see appendix (16))
- the student needs to improve his/her style to write like the English do. (marker 6, see appendix (16))
- the student has written an Arabic composition using English words. (marker 6, see appendix (16))
- The influence of Arabic language is obvious (marker 10, see appendix (16))
- no command of sentence structure (marker 8, see appendix (14))
- language is approaching the level of competence (marker 8, see appendix (14))
- nearly a pass, but somewhat careless (marker 3, see appendix (14))
- weak overall structure, no paragraphing. Mistakes of tense and word class (marker 6, see appendix (13))
- Problems of vocabulary, spelling and idioms (marker 6, see appendix (13))
- short (marker 8, see appendix (13))
- very thin in ideas (marker 10, see appendix (13))

Comments like 'short' or 'thin' in ideas do not really help students in pinning down the source of their problems. Even if an essay is short, it is not self-evident what the student must do to improve it. An answer to this question will vary from one student to

another: an essay could be short because the student is not familiar with the subject; and therefore, in this case what s/he needs to do is more reading or more research. Another essay might be short because it is packed with information which is not well illustrated (the essay lacks examples or pieces of evidence to support a certain claim); and hence in this case s/he needs to look for examples or to carry out some experiments to support or refute what s/he is quoting.

While the British and Syrian markers have in common one feature (that of generality), they, nevertheless, differ in the nature of comments they provided. British markers seem to assess students in relation to both grammar and content; Syrian markers, on the other hand, seem to give priority to grammar alone. For instance, marker 7 (a Syrian marker) suggests that student no. 14 deserves praise because the vocabulary and syntax used is 'reasonably' advanced. Marker 7 goes on giving examples to show how good he is in forming acceptable grammatical structures. No reference is made to the way the argument is tackled, or to the success or failure of the student in conveying his message to readers. Marker 7 seems to judge all her students only on the basis of the grammaticality of their writing (see appendixes (15) and (16)). Marker 7 is not the only Syrian marker who ignores the communicative function of students' writing. Marker 8 also comments only on grammatical mistakes, punctuation, prepositions, and tenses (see appendix (16)). Marker 5 states clearly that he might pass student 20 for the few mistakes (grammatical mistakes) he made. Again there is no reference to communication (see appendix (16)). Marker 3 also suggests that

student no. 3's essay is acceptable because she does not have 'deadly' mistakes (see appendix (15)). In the Syrian context and in some other contexts, teachers' expectation or teachers' comments could be misleading. In the case of the Syrian learners, they are misled by their teachers' comments to believe that grammaticality is the key to communicative success.

As viewed by Syrian markers, assessment is supposed to be a report on how well students have mastered the following elements, ranked according to their importance:

1- grammar

2- punctuation

3- spelling

4- content

Accordingly, Syrian markers typically stress grammar at the expense of content. British markers, however, deal with both issues, grammar and content, placing more emphasis on content and the development of the argument than on grammar. Behind the diversity in the nature of comments lie differences in teachers' expectations, which is very much influenced by the nature of teaching materials and customary teaching emphases. While Syrian markers follow a traditional approach which mainly focuses on grammar, British markers tend to follow either explicitly or implicitly a communicative approach, with an emphasis on communication. Whereas some Syrian markers do not comment at all on content or presentation of subject matter, almost all British markers do comment on this aspect of composition, as in the following:

- difficult to follow (marker 3, see appendix (14))

- inability to present information in an interesting manner (marker 5, see appendix (14))
- There is no real understanding shown of how to develop an argument (marker 6, see appendix (14))
- inability to handle argument. Incomprehensible (marker 8, see appendix (14))
- The story became incomprehensible in the middle because of the lack of attention to reference/cohesion (marker 1, see appendix (14))

These comments and others indicate that there is a failure in communication between the reader and the writer: the writer (the student) has not succeeded in conveying her/his message to the reader (the teacher), whatever the degree of local grammaticality of the writing.

Another point only brought up by the British markers is that one source of problems in the writing of Syrian students is the fact that either grammar (poor grammar or lack of the knowledge of grammatical rules), or lack of practice (students do not have enough practice in discussing or developing an argument) - or perhaps both - hinder their ability to produce an acceptable piece of writing.

This is clear from the following comments made on the essays:

- Attempt at structuring essay is undermined by poor grammar which makes it difficult to follow the argument (marker 5, see appendix (14))
- I feel that the limited vocabulary seriously affects handling the content (marker 6, see appendix (14))
- This student has a good vocabulary, a better understanding of

sentence construction and is therefore able to present a more sophisticated argument (marker 6, see appendix (14))

- This can be understood, but the student's vocabulary is very basic and therefore this reads as an outline of the story (marker 6, see appendix (14))
- The essay is unstructured. This is partly the fault of the essay question- the student is asked to run before s/he can walk. If given guidelines, or if the task were in stages, the marker might not have such a horrid job (marker 1, see appendix (13))
- It seems to me, by now that these students are being given exercises which are too difficult for them, because their grasp of vocabulary and grammar is not up to discussing a film or presenting an argument. It would appear that they need to be tested on much more simple exercises first and be given much more practice (marker 5, see appendix (13))

My analysis so far of comments made by markers involved in the experiment shows that comments, as they stand, are of little help to students because they lack specific details and accuracy. If comments are not useful to students, then one needs to ask what modes of assessment might be effective in changing the quality of students' writing. Possible answers to this question are proposed by Hillocks (1982), and Gee (1972), Taylor and Hoedt (1966), Stevens (1973) and Hausner (1975). Although all these researchers are involved in the teaching of English to native speakers of English (see pages 280 - 285), I am, nevertheless, going to apply their results to EFL students for the following reasons:

(1) due to the lack of research in the teaching of composition to



learners of a second/foreign language, we need to adopt L1 work.

- (2) the fact that answers that have been provided by researchers in the teaching of English in an L1 context could be a good source of information to L2 teachers. This idea is recognised by Zamel (1976):

We have acted as if teaching composition to ESL students is something totally unrelated to the teaching of composition in regular classes and have thus deprived ourselves, I believe, of much valuable information. ... What we have failed to realize is that by the time our students are ready to write compositions, that is, create and express their own thoughts and ideas in the second language, they need the same kind of instruction that students in English classrooms need. (p. 68)

Gee (1972) examined the effects of praise, negative criticism and absence of comments on 139 high school American students. Gee's subjects were divided into three groups. Each group received one type of comment over four compositions during a four-week period. The compositions were not preceded by instruction; nor were the assignments linked for instructional purposes. Gee found that:

- (1) There was no significant difference in the quality of the writing of the three groups of students. The quality of students' writing was measured according to the number of T-units (T-units are independent clauses with their modifying structures). Perhaps, the negative criticism and the 'no comment' groups wrote fewer T-units .
- (2) The negative criticism and 'no comment' groups had significantly more negative attitudes towards writing experiences than did the praised students. The groups' attitudes to writing were determined by a questionnaire given at the end of the

experiment. It consists of eleven questions which could be answered negatively or positively. Students who responded positively to six or more questions were considered as having generally favorable attitudes toward the writing experiment, and students who responded negatively to six or more questions were considered as having negative attitudes toward the experiment.

On the effect of negative and positive comments, Taylor and Hoedt (1966) examined the effects of comments on fourth graders (a grade school is a primary school in the United States). They had two groups: One had positive comments and the other one had negative comments. They found that:

- (1) There was no difference in the quality of the writing of the two groups.
- (2) There were significant differences between the two groups on a number of behavioural and attitudinal measures, such as: While students in the group that received negative comments were displeased, folded or hid their papers from sight, and wanted to discontinue lessons, students in the other group seemed pleased and shared their papers with others.

Furthermore, Stevens (1973), and Hausner (1975), also showed that:

- (1) Comments had no effect on the quality of students' writing.
- (2) Students receiving negative comments had less desirable attitudes toward writing than did those receiving positive comments.

All the above studies show that teachers' comments on students' papers/compositions have little or no effects on the quality of their writing. They do, however, have an effect on their attitudes

to writing, namely, a negative attitude to writing.

Since Syrian students usually do not get any feedback on their performance in English, they are likely to have a negative attitude to writing; for, as I have just demonstrated, 'no comment' or negative assessment influences students' attitudes to writing. Briefly, the system, as it stands, does not really motivate the students towards learning. The way English is taught and assessed does not encourage Syrian students to be keen on writing and hence on learning a foreign language more generally. At the preparatory and secondary levels, for instance, most students look at English as a subject that they have to pass through by memorising some of the grammatical rules. It is only at the university level that some students consider paying more attention to English because they start realising how they could need it in the future for academic, occupational, and as well as international purposes.

While Gee (1972), Taylor and Hoedt (1966), Stevens (1973) and Hausner (1975), discussed the effects of comments on students' writing, Hillock's (1982) examined the effect of:

- (1) activities plus four writing assignments versus four writing assignments only
- (2) brief comments versus long comments
- (3) revision versus no revision

on improving the quality of students' writing.

He based his research on the following hypotheses:

- (1) If comments focus on a particular aspect of writing over a period of time, they may have greater effects on changing the

students' writing.

(2) Comments would be even more effective if they are based on specific instructional objectives and content.

To test these hypotheses, Hillocks with the help of three high school teachers, studied 12 classes (each teacher used four classes). The group of students involved in the experiment were then divided into two groups: one received instructional activities; the other did not. Activities, carried out in the class, include examining and writing a description of a sea shell in such a way that another person could identify the shell simply by reading the description; examining a set of objects and finding words to discriminate between their textures; examining photographs of landscapes and people, then, writing about them to capture their essential details and qualities; and doing physical exercise and describing bodily sensations.

Besides activities, Hillocks also asked all his subjects (the above two groups) to write four assignments on topics which past students had enjoyed. The nature of teachers' comments on the written compositions was controlled so that they would not be negative, because of the potential result of negative comments on students' attitudes: all comments were supposed to make at least one suggestion for improvement. However, one group received brief comments (no more than ten words); the other received longer comments (more than ten words).

To test these factors, each class involved in the experiment was asked to write two compositions prior to the instructional period and two following the instructional period. The same topics

were used as pretests and posttests. A pre-test is a test given before learning has occurred. A post-test, on the other hand, is a test given after learning has occurred or is supposed to have occurred. The comparison of pre-test and post-test results measures the amount of progress a learner has made. The topics are:

- (a) Write about a person, place, or idea that you feel strongly about. Be as specific as you can so that a person reading what you have written will feel as you do about it, will feel what you feel, and see what you see.
- (b) Write about an experience that you feel strongly about. Be as specific as you can.

The compositions were collected, coded and submitted to experienced teachers who rated them according to the scale of specificity and focus in writing.

Hillocks's results were as follows:

- (1) The group with activities made a significant gain. The gain was twice that made by those only carrying out the assignment.
- (2) Assignments plus comments resulted in a gain, not as significant as that of the group with activities (the gain was half that of the group with activities).
- (3) The longer comments were somewhat more effective than the short comments. On the other hand, in the assignment-only group, the short comment students scores were about two thirds or less than either of the instructional activity groups. The 'long comment' group scores, however, were less than half the gain for the short comment group. Thus, the long comment group with

activities scored nearly four times that gained by the long comment group only (without activities). In other words, long comments turned out to be more effective with activities than were short comments. With assignment only, long comments were considerably less effective than were short comments.

The above results led Hillocks to conclude that:

- (A) instructional activities which precede writing are more powerful in causing effective change than the assignment alone.
- (B) activities are more important in changing the quality of students' writing than lengthy comments.
- (C) without activities, long comments have a depressive effect. Activities help to make the suggestions in the longer comments more meaningful. Without activities, comments can be interpreted as criticisms.
- (D) if teachers have to choose between time for planning and time for commenting, they ought to go for planning-time, since activities lead to better writing.

This research, which I have presented in some detail because of its significance for course organisation and teaching strategy, suggests that it is instructional activities preceding writing which have the most powerful effect on changing the quality of students' writing (see also Hillocks (1979) and (1974)). Improving the quality of Syrian writers, therefore, has to be achieved through activities, some of which have been suggested in the last chapter. In other words, other than teaching grammar and assessing grammar, introducing writing activities is a priority. This should give students the chance to understand, or have an insight into, the

process of writing, and also might help students to realise that grammar is not the only factor which is required to produce a coherent utterance. A change of emphasis, as well as a change in the mode of assessment, is urgently needed.

#### 6.4. Peer-provided feedback, and new approaches to teaching writing

In this chapter, I have argued that assessing the grammaticality of the final submitted product of Syrian university students has had negative results, including the following:

- (1) Emphasizing the grammaticality of the final product can be misleading. Students are led to believe that grammaticality is the most important factor which has to be maintained to produce an acceptable piece of writing.
- (2) Summative assessment (marking) does not provide good evidence of how good students' performances are; marks are arbitrary and idiosyncratic.
- (3) General comments are unlikely to be beneficial to students, because they can be applied to any piece of writing.
- (4) Emphasizing and assessing grammar does not help Syrian university students to write better compositions.
- (5) Activities preceding writing can have powerful effects on enhancing the quality of students' writings.
- (6) Comments have no significant effect on the quality of students' writings; so time used for commenting could be better redirected towards planning activities. In the case of Syrian learners, time used for practising drills (as a remedy for some of the grammatical errors in the students' writings) might be better

used in planning activities and carrying them out in the class. These arguments, together, suggest that marking - the mode of assessment currently adopted in Syrian university classes - is not effective. I, therefore, suggest that peer-group editing and continuous feedback are also essential in assessing writing, since these processes provide information on a performance 'which affects subsequent performance' (Lamberg, 1980: 63). Having suggested these processes, however, does not necessarily guarantee a successful outcome. In practice, teachers might receive some resistance from students when introducing the concept of peer editing for the following reasons:

(1) students might think that this is not their job. It is the teacher's job.

(2) students might claim they do not know what to look for in a piece of writing.

Thus, Dixon (1986) suggests that teachers must reassure students that they will be responsible for the final marking and grading of composition. He also adds that teachers must train students to become observant readers by modelling editing skills before the whole class and training them to perform similar tasks when faced with their peers' writing.

The idea that students improve as the result of providing themselves and their peers with feedback is supported by experimental research. In his study, Wolter (1975) shows that unlike a 'no-feedback' control group, a group that received feedback from their teachers and their peers made significant improvements in their writing. Moreover, Millet (1969), and Sager (1973), report



that students who were taught to apply a rating scale to their own (and to their peers') writing had significant differences in performance over a 'no-feedback' control group.

Feedback, then, has an effective influence on students' performance. But further questions arise regarding the relative usefulness of feedback from peer-groups and feedback from teachers. In their studies, Allen and Sutton (1964), and Pierson (1972), show that there were no statistically significant differences between groups receiving peer and teacher-provided feedback. Similarly, Ford (1973) and Lagana (1974) also demonstrate that superior performance on compositions and grammar-usage tests was achieved by groups receiving peer-provided feedback as compared to groups receiving teacher-provided feedback. However, differences were not significant. It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that feedback, whether from teachers or peer-group, achieves similar results.

All the above studies, and other studies such as Arapoff (1969), Witbeck (1976), Wolter and Lamberg (1977), Lamberg (1980), Crowhurst (1982), and Hogan (1984), stress the importance of continuous feedback. Participating in peer-group editing is beneficial for the following reasons:

- (1) Students' writing is read by real readers. This, in turn, helps writers to develop an awareness of, and responsiveness to, their audience.
- (2) Students are given the chance to judge themselves as well as to judge other students.
- (3) Students are critical of their own writings, as well as of other

people's writings.

(4) Students are given a means of measuring their own performance, and thereby of providing themselves with information on what they have done in a writing assignment. In other words, they are given the chance for individual learning, as well as for recognising their responsibility in the learning process.

(5) Students improve their awareness of the elements of good writing and enhance their oral and written communication skills.

All the above remarks, if compared with the effects of marking on students' writings (see results on page 286), suggest that the introduction of continuous feedback to assess writing in the Syrian context is highly desirable. This proposal of continuous feedback is based on results provided by experimental research on feedback, as well as Hillocks's idea (1982), that it is ongoing comments (feedback) which bring about effective change in the quality of students' writing, not feedback after activities have been completed.

## Notes

1. Table (6.1.) gives my interpretation of errors, not the teacher's. I want to show that although students in group 2 have passed the exam, they still have serious grammatical problems. To prove this, an analysis of the errors is needed, and I have decided to comment on errors made by group 2 which are also errors underlined by the teacher.
2. Table (6.2.) gives my interpretation of errors, not the teacher's. Here I want to compare errors made by groups 1 and 2; this requires an analysis of errors made by group 1, which again are also errors underlined by the teacher.
3. 'Uncontrolled marking' can be applied to the marking carried out by the ten British and ten Syrian markers involved in my case study because no feedback on the criteria of marking was given. In other words, in 'uncontrolled marking' no details of the range of factors in the writing teachers are supposed to be looking for is provided.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### General Conclusions

In order to investigate the main concern of this thesis, which is to explore the effectiveness of current methods of teaching English composition to Syrian university students, experimental work has been carried out:

- (1) to show how current teaching methods fail to achieve the professed goals of providing students with knowledge of English grammar.
- (2) to find out whether current teaching methods are successful in producing competent writers in English, at the level of discourse organisation.
- (3) to investigate whether current teaching methods are successful in adopting appropriate modes of assessment.

Analysis of the data suggests that these methods are generally ineffective.

The findings are employed to formulate recommendations for the teaching of writing in Syria, and suggestions regarding directions for future studies in contrastive rhetoric, error analysis, and assessment. These suggestions are as follows (the page number in brackets indicates where the finding is discussed within the relevant chapter):

- (1) current teaching methods of English in Syrian universities are not effective (page 127).
- (2) providing L2 learners with a great deal of conscious knowledge

- of L2 grammatical rules, and correcting them repeatedly, is not a particularly effective teaching strategy if the aim is to make learners competent users of grammatical rules (page 129).
- (3) error analysis and contrastive analysis need to supplement each other's results (page 123).
  - (4) error correction can be ineffective, since it is not always successful in eliminating errors in students' performances (page 125).
  - (5) variation in the nature of ILs of different groups of learners is due to learners' differences in exposure to the target language, as well as difference in the nature of the teaching input (page 126).
  - (6) when they write in English, Syrian writers are not as efficient as the native speakers of English in organising information units (page 170).
  - (7) Syrian writers' failure is language independent, i.e. it has nothing to do with them being native speakers of Arabic (page 170).
  - (8) rhetorical strategies cut across all cultures, because strategies followed to chunk information units and infer the intended message are not exclusive to a certain language group (page 188).
  - (9) different language groups only vary in realising different cultural concepts because background assumptions are different as a result of cultural difference, and not language difference (page 188).
  - (10) Kaplan's 'Contrastive Rhetorical Hypothesis' as well as

Shouby's (Shouby, 1951) claims about Arabic style, are not sustainable, in that the problems my Syrian writers face are not directly the result of L1 (Arabic) (page 189).

- (11) there is an urgent need for a change in emphasis in the writing practices carried out in Syrian university classes: instead of concentrating primarily on the teaching of grammatical rules, the communicative functions of writing need to be given more attention (page 252).
- (12) emphasizing the grammaticality of the final product can be misleading. Students are led to believe that grammaticality is the most important factor which has to be maintained to produce an acceptable piece of writing (page 273).
- (13) summative assessment (marking) does not provide good evidence of how good students' performances are; marks are arbitrary and idiosyncratic (page 272).
- (14) general comments are unlikely to be beneficial to students, because they can be applied to any piece of writing (page 275).
- (15) instructional activities which precede writing can have powerful effects on enhancing the quality of students' writing (page 285).
- (16) comments have no significant effect on the quality of students' writings; so time used for commenting could be better redirected towards planning activities. In the case of Syrian learners, time used practising drills (as a remedy for grammatical errors) might be better used in planning activities and carrying them out in the class (page 286).

All these findings suggest that there is an urgent need for a change in emphasis in the writing practices carried out in Syrian university classes: besides the teaching of grammatical rules, the communicative functions of writing need to be attended to.

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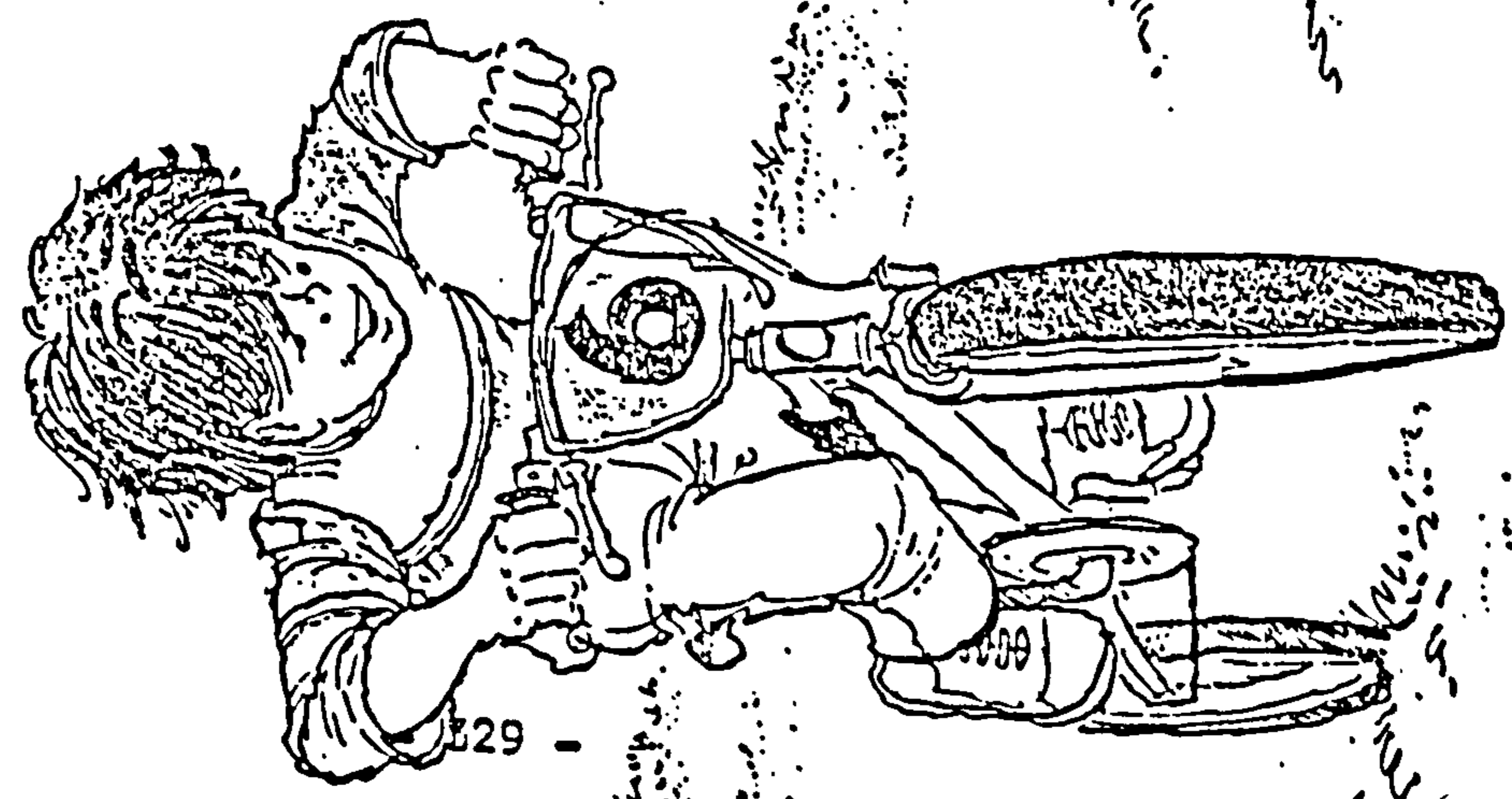
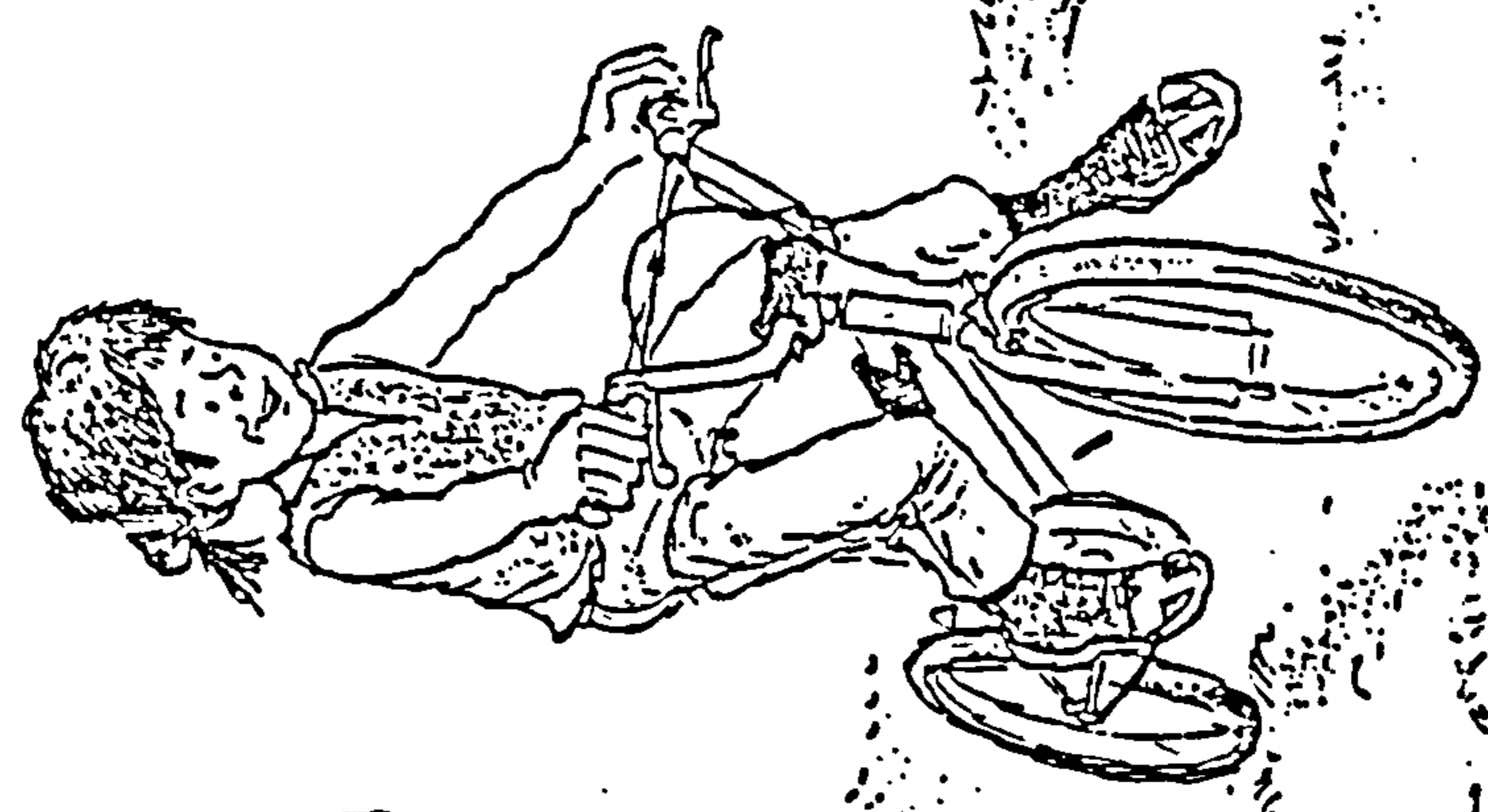
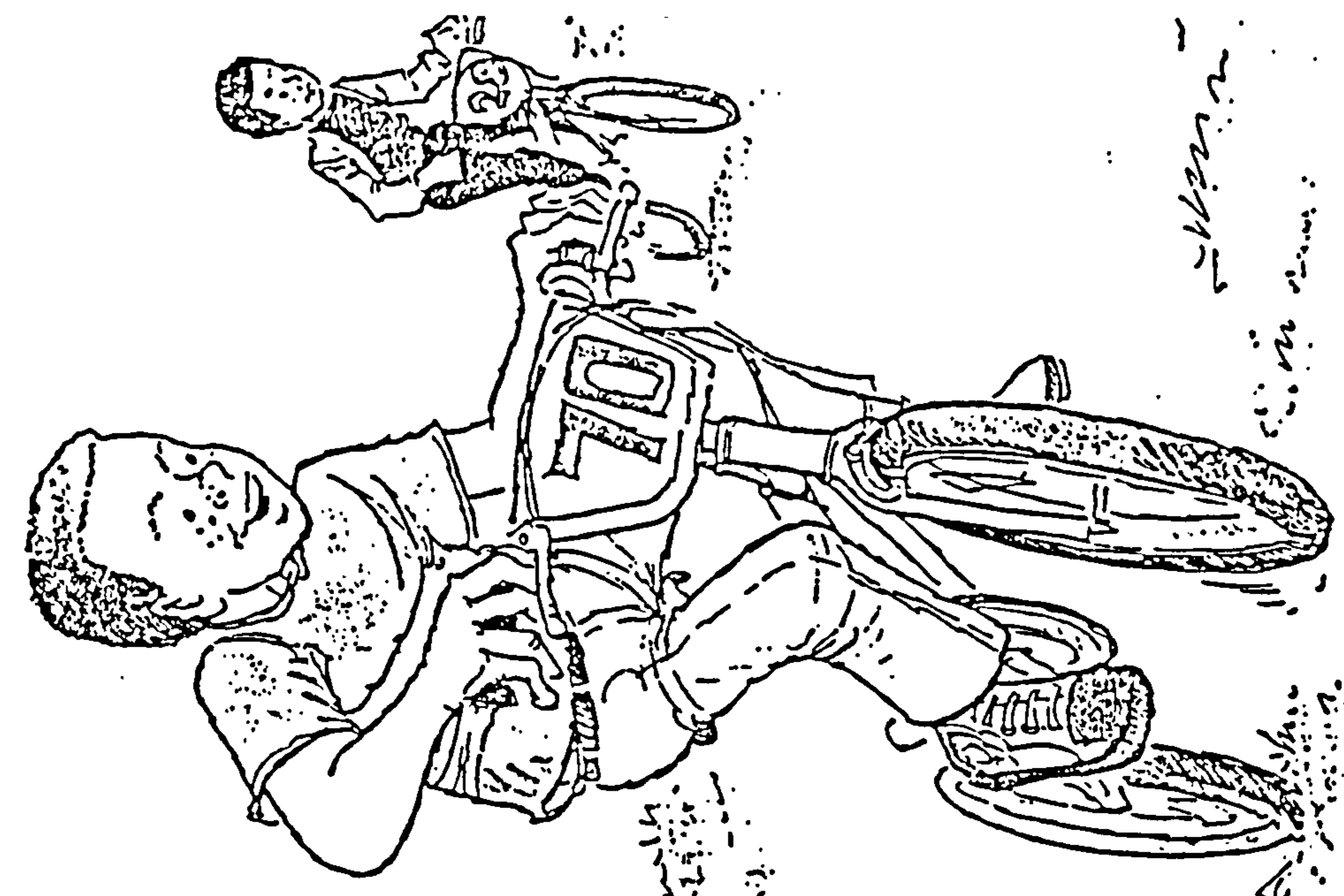
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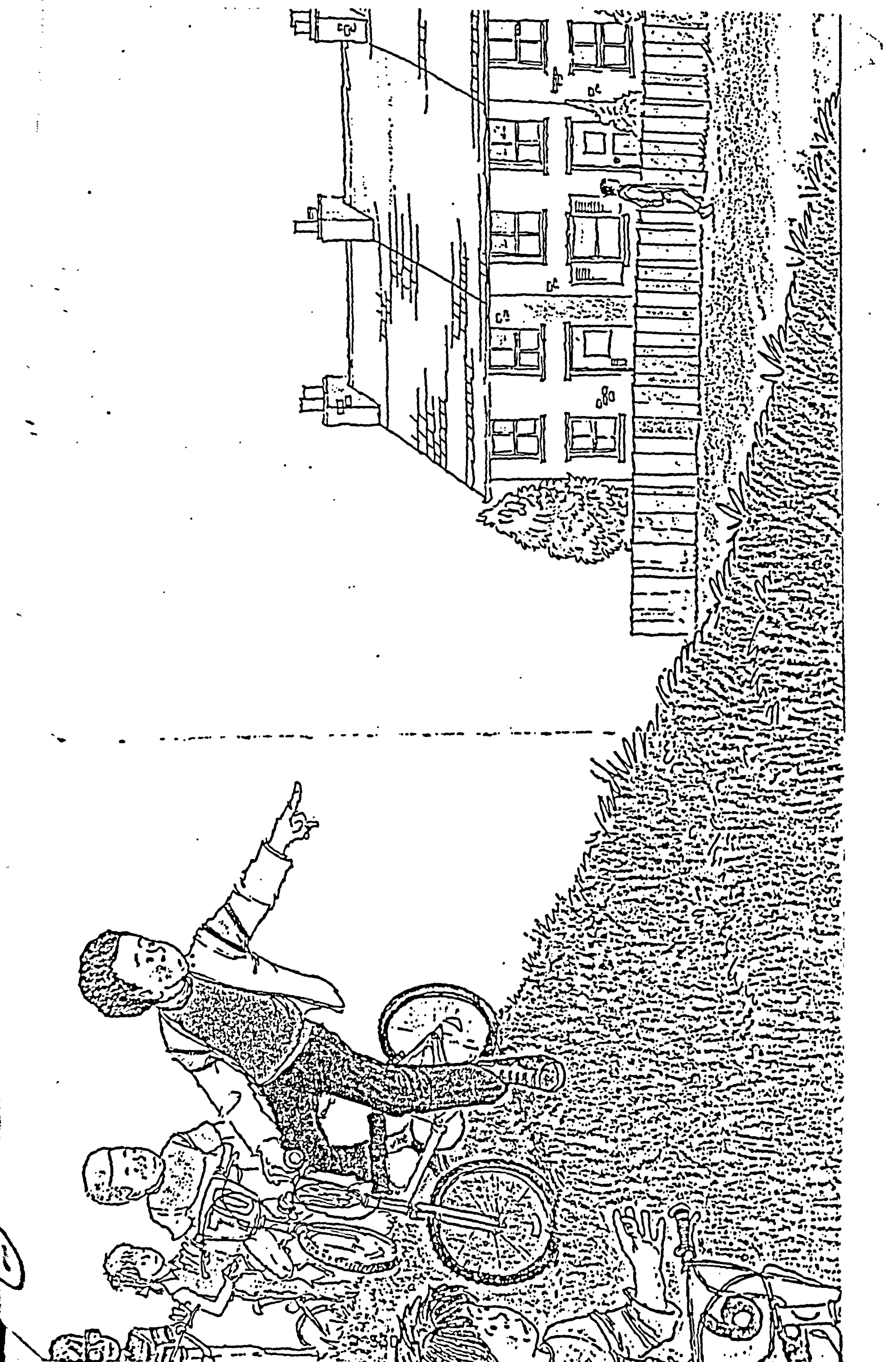


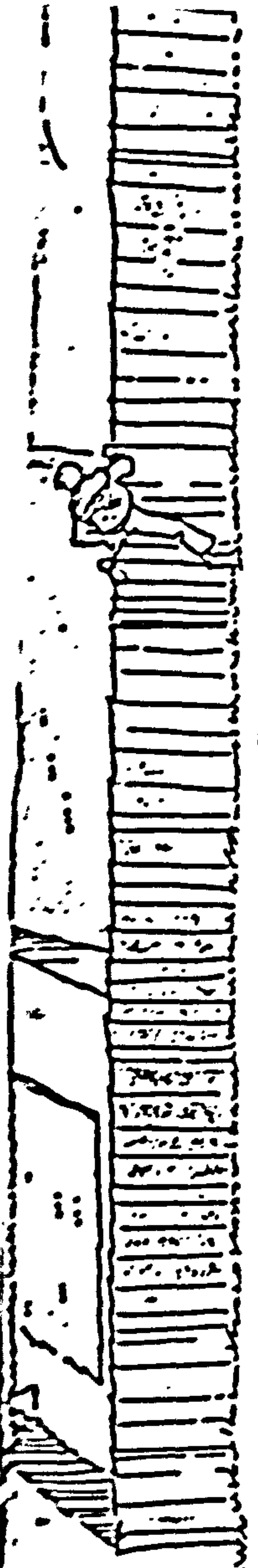
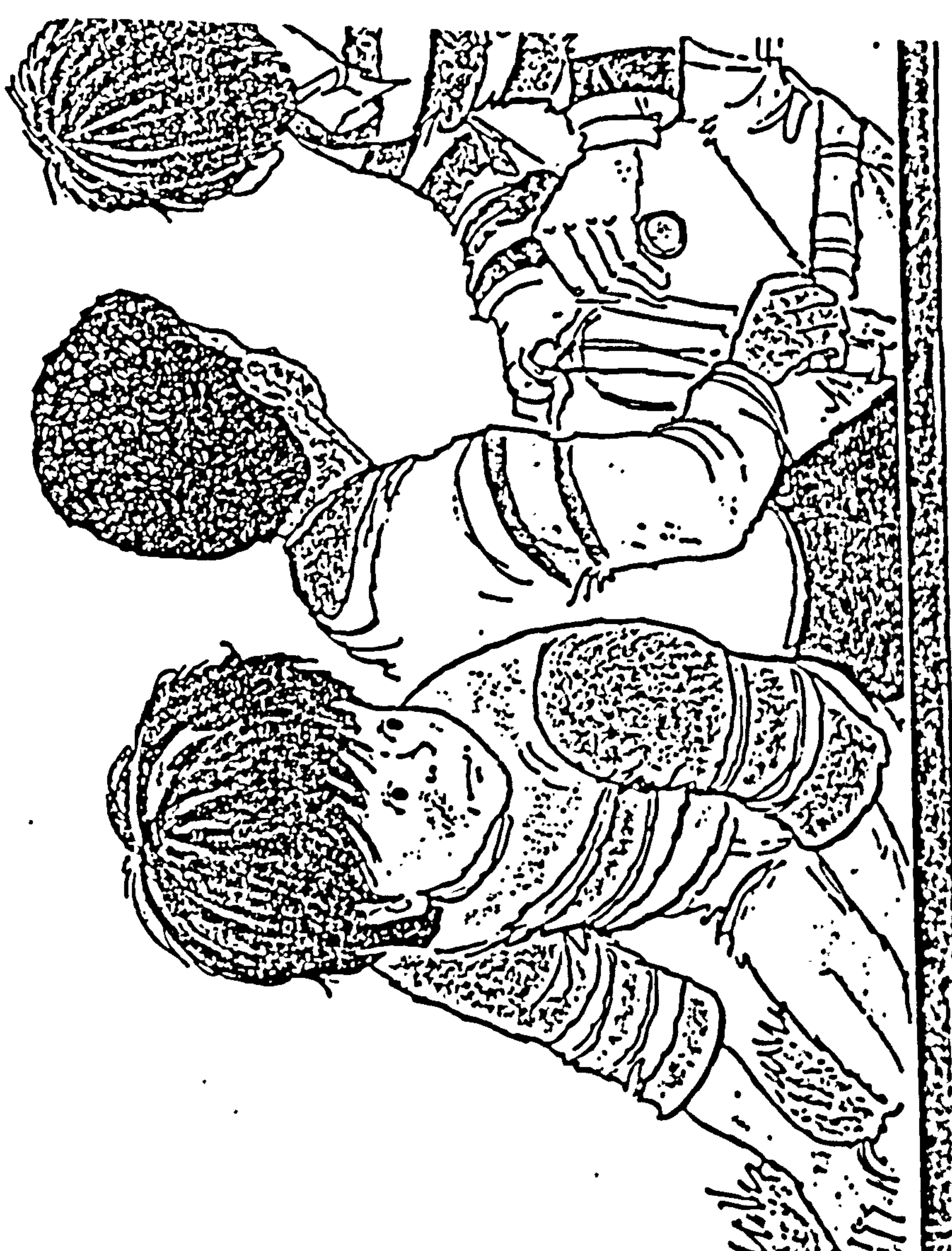
## APPENDIXES

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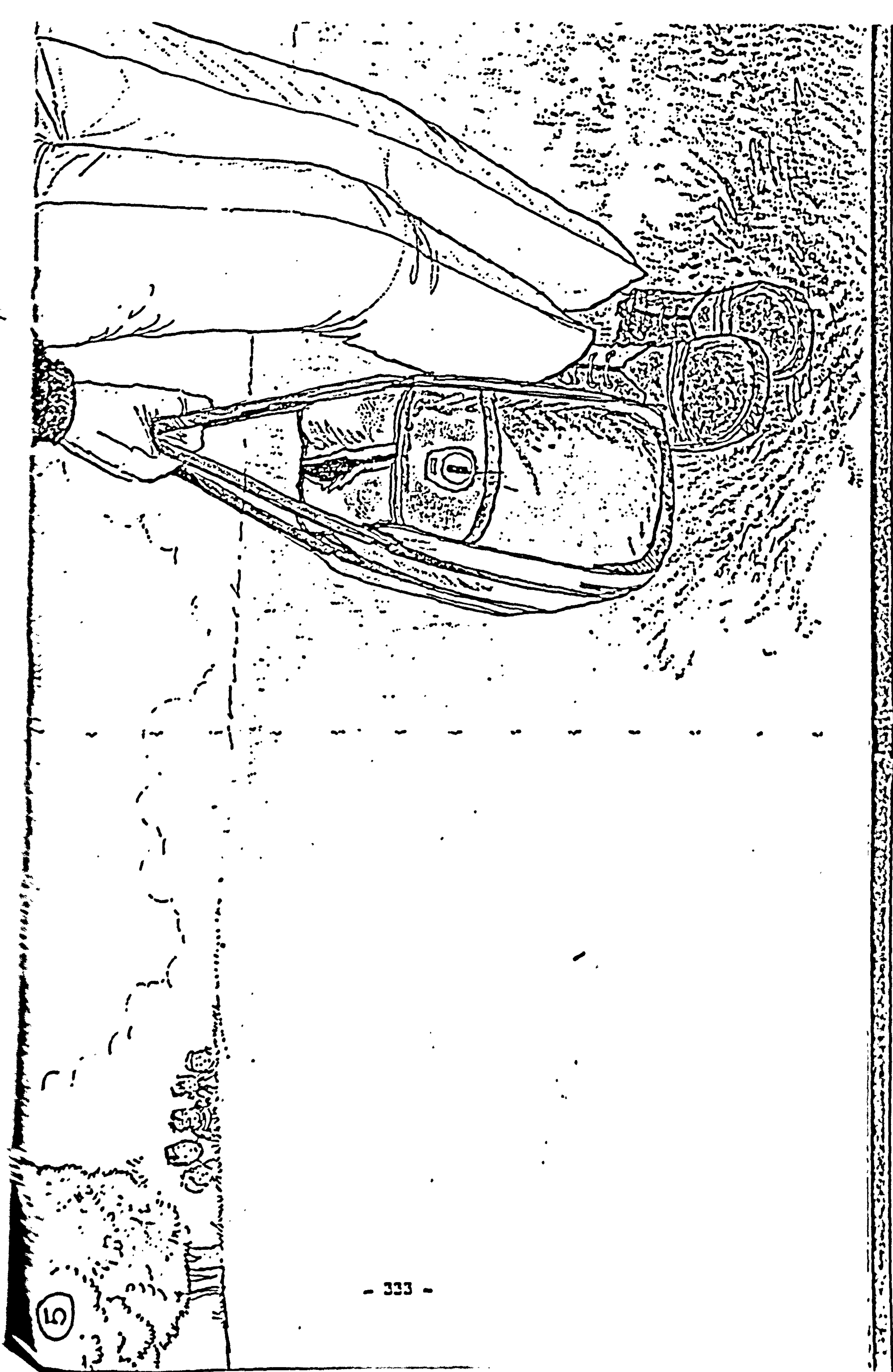
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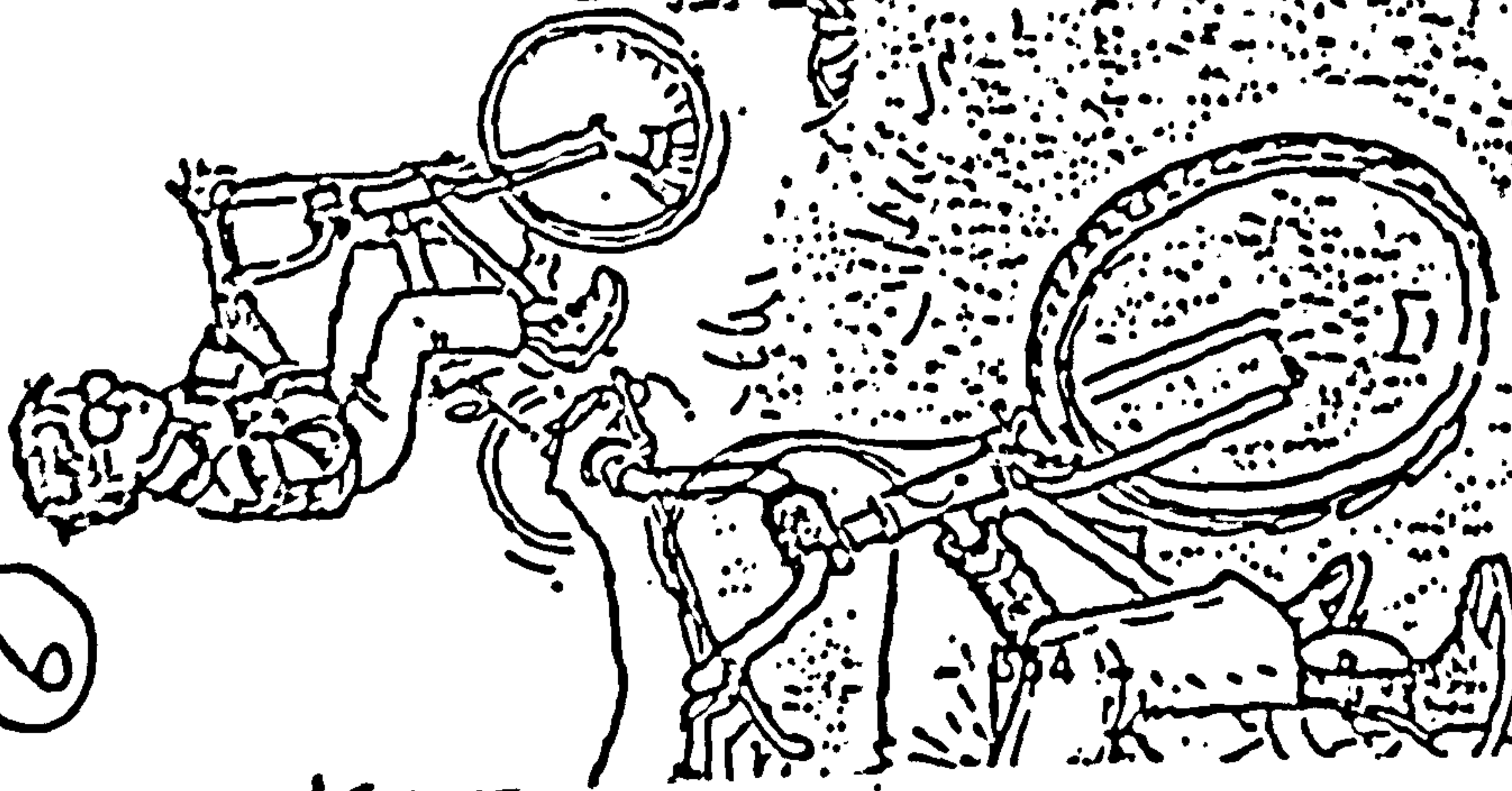
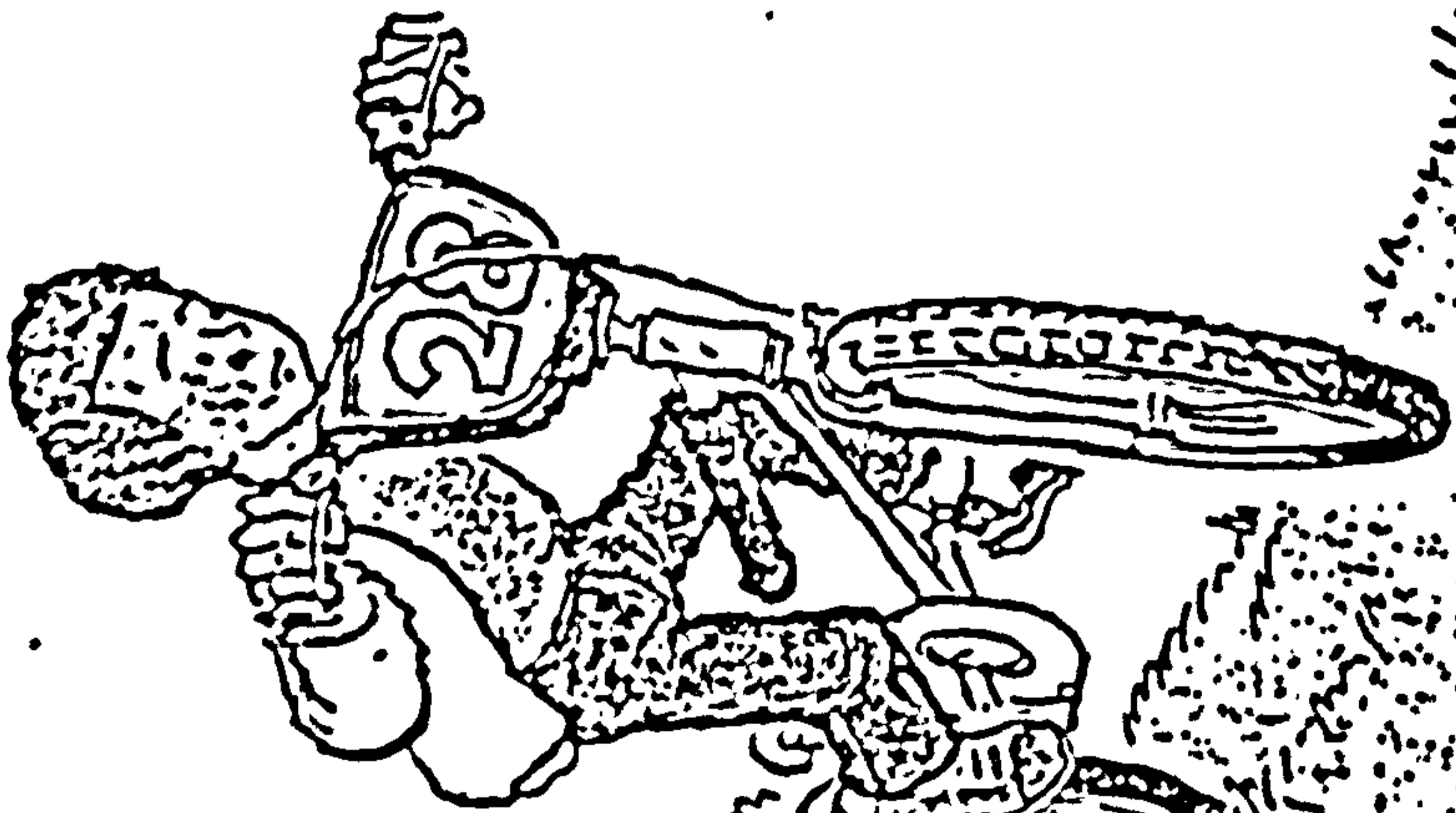
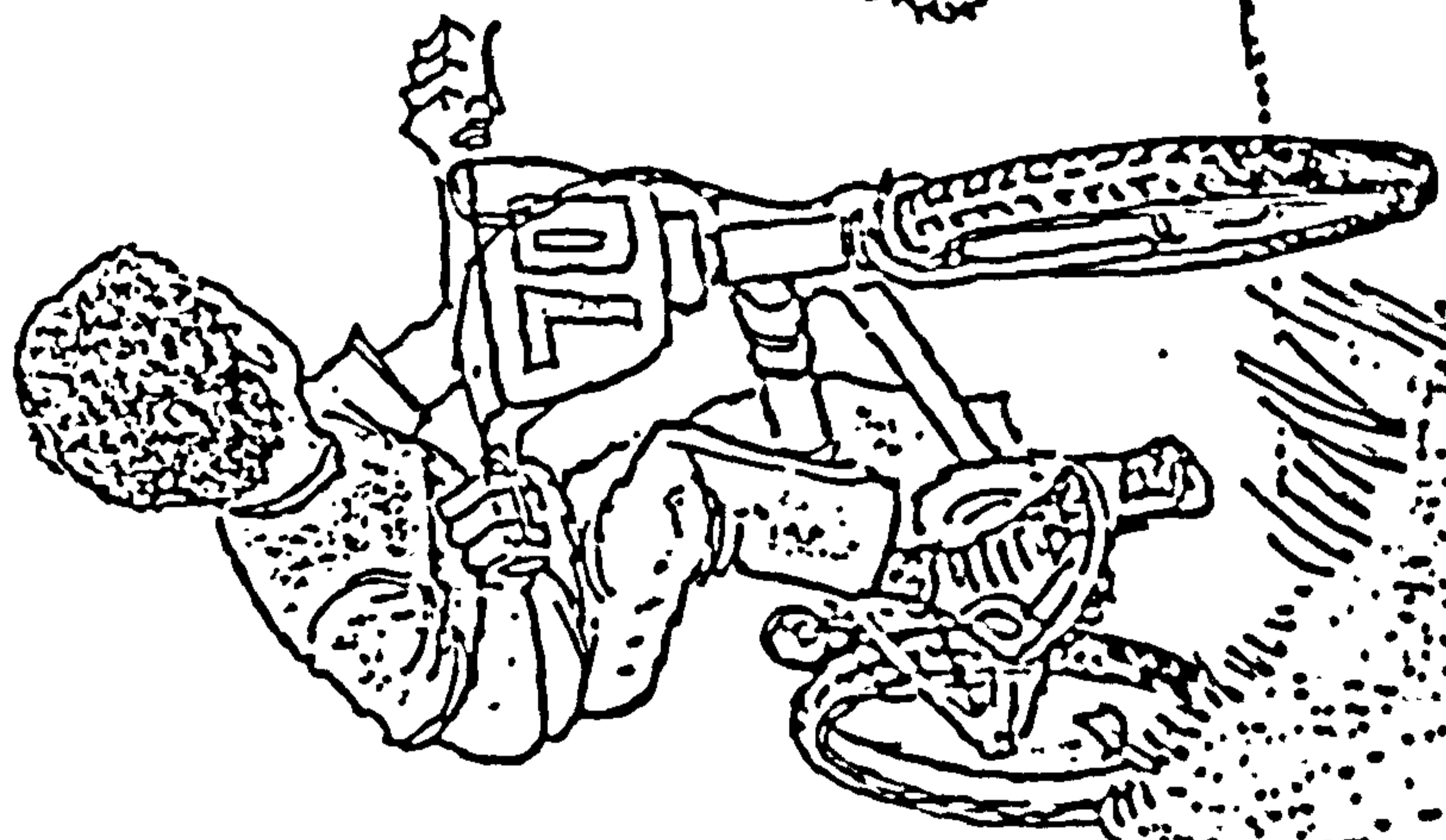


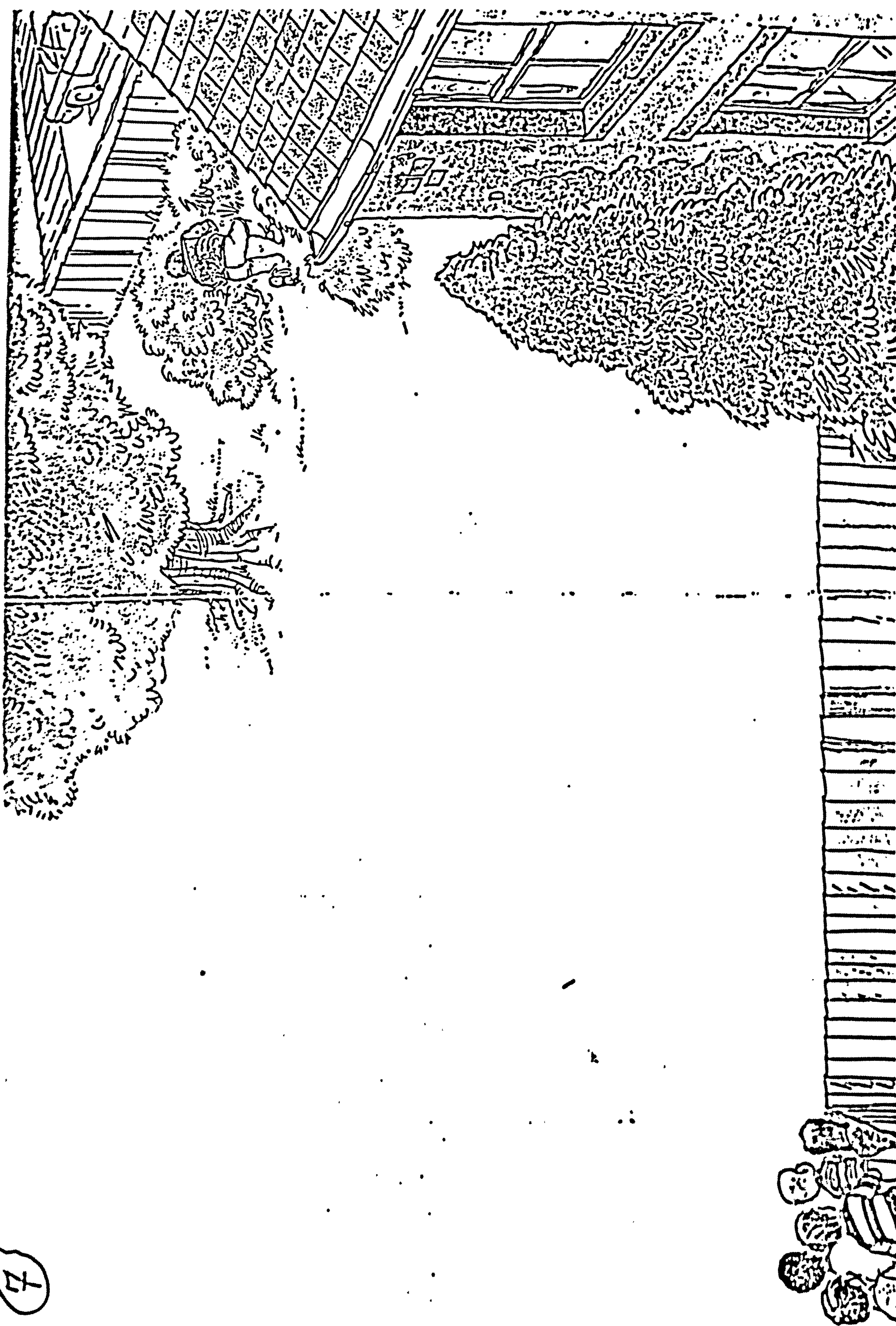




(4)







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## Appendix (2)

### William Shakespeare

- born 23 April 1564
- baptized on 26 April in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-Upon-Avon
- eldest son of John Shakespeare
- John Shakespeare (William's father):
  - worked as a dealer
  - married 1557, Mary Arden
  - got eight children, out of whom five survived (four sons and one daughter)
- William's education: received education at the local grammar school
- William's family:
  - married on 28 Nov. 1582, Anne Hathaway
  - got three children (two girls and one boy):
    - Susanna, eldest daughter, born on 1583
    - Hamnet and Judith, twins, born in 1585
- William's career:
  - schoolmaster in the Country (early in his life)
  - later on, man of theatre and poet
  - his theatrical life centred in London
  - worked with the Lord Chamberlain's men (London's leading company, occupying the Globe)
- 1596 William's son Hamnet died, buried in Holy Trinity Churchyard
- 1601 his father died
- 1607 Susanna (William's daughter) married a physician, John Hall
- William's only granddaughter Elizabeth Hall
- 1608 his mother died, buried in Holy Trinity
- 1616 (February) his second daughter, Judith, married Thomas Quiney
- 1616 (April 23) William died, buried in Holy Trinity

### Appendix (3)

#### Text 1

The story is there were a group of boys on a cycling day. One of them was very fast so he arrived the first one to the house which was out of the village at the country side; This cyclist was very cautious about every thing, so when he arrived that house he found a man trying to get in the garden jumping over the fence. The cyclist told his friends about that man, they looked carefully and decided to phone the police. One of them went to phone the police while the other keep looking at the man who is trying to get in the garden. The man got in and stole some thing from the valuable properties, he put it in a bag and carried it and try to get out from the same way but he found all the cyclists waiting for him at the fence. Therefore he rushed to the other side of the garden, the cyclist followed him to the other side. Fortunately the police were waiting for him on the other side of the garden. When the thief saw the police he throw the bag and tried to escape from them, but there were two police men caught him and took him to the police station.

#### Text 2

A sunny day and the children were cycling happily enjoying the fresh air, while they pass near the Waltons' house they have notice a very suspicious person.

The children noticed that person was trying to enter the Waltons', and he managed to enter that place rushing towards the opened window near the front door, and he managed to break in the house.

It was obvious that he was thief and he stole a handbag of very dear things, and he ran away.

So the children rushed down the hill toward the nearest police station and they told the policemen, whom they came at once, they followed the thief who was away from the Waltons' fence trying to reach his parked car.

The boys helped the two detectives to trace the thief, they took them to the field where they saw him.

Fortunately, the detectives caught the thief while he was running away, and they arrest him. They discover they he stole a recorder.

#### Text 3

In a very quiet town, 5 boys were playing near their houses, they were very happy, suddenly they saw a strange man walk near one of their boys' houses.

The boy tray to have a cover and watche this stranger man.

Later the stranger tray to jump over the fence's hous, and he run in the way to the hous, after a will, this 5 boyes saw this man with a bag going out of the house, and he looks normal.

The boyes when they saw this man with bag going out the house tray to call any of they parent or any of the local people.

The man was about to reach his car when two strong men of the town tray to stop him, the bag was foll down and a vedio recorde was appear in this bag.

the 5 boyes run to that places and they were very happy to what they had had been done.

#### Text 4

A few of children were playing on their bicycles around the houses. Suddenly one of the children saw a strainge locking at one of the houses. So he told his friends about that. Those children stand a way from the house locking what the strange man is going to do. While they were locking the man jump over the fence trying to get into the house. He runs in the garden very quikly and break in the house. After a while he left the house carrying a bag full of mony, gold and what even he found in the house. At this time the children were confidence that this man is a thief. So they dicided that one of the children should go to call the police, and the other stay locking at the thief to see to where he will go. The police came very quickly to an eara near the thief's way. But th thief saw the police's car and try to run way. The police run him and catch him. The children were very happy because they did some thing very good, which was helping the police in catching the bad pepole.

#### Text 5

In the school in our area, There were five children agreed to go for a bicycle's race the next weekend. While they were very exited about the end Hishan shouted; look at that man, he seems he is going to jump over that wall.

With the childish curiosity every one had suddenly forgotten about the race and stopped watching the thief.

After few minutes the man got out the house with a handbag in his hand and running away with his crime, but they did not wand he let it go. They run on their bicycles to the nearest grown up friends and told them about what they had seen.

After that every one harried after the thief.

The strong men managed to catch the bad man who felt very afried and dropped the

bag to show an electrical set inside it. The children ran towards the caught thief happily and helped the men in controlling him.

#### Text 6

Five children are cycling. They seem to be having a good time. One of the children notices a strange man nearby a big house. He points at him, attracting the attention of the other cyclers. The children watch the stranger as he jumps over the fence of the big house. They look puzzled and feel a sense of responsibility. The man, whose face is grim, heads stealthily towards the house. The children watch him, without approaching the house. Then, they see the thief carrying a big bag. They become sure of the fact that the man has stolen something. They cycle fast, seemingly choosing another way to watch him, without him realizing their pursuit. Then, they see him hiding the bag among the bushes. All of a sudden, two men seize the thief, while the children rush towards them. The bag reveals something like a document or a map of the building.

#### Text 7

A group of children are cycling around their houses. Suddenly, one of them sees a man wondering near by a house suspiciously.

The kid who saw the man shouted telling his friends to see the man who was at that time about to jump on the fence surrounding the house. When the man noticed that he is discovered, he started running away from the place holding in his hand a medium handbag.

The kids decided to follow him on their bicycles, finally, they overcome him and catch him.

#### Text 8

On a pleasant day a few of us set early in the morning, on our bikes. We decided to head down the hill, when we reached the other side of the hill Tony pointed out a man jumping the fence of the big house, which lays in front of us on the other side of the hill. After negotiating the matter we decided to find out what exactly that man was going to do. Peeping over the fence, we saw him running out with a handbag. We were sure that he did not have this handbag with him before. Without any hesitation all of us followed him. He was walking down the road toward the back of the house. Abandoning our bikes we pursued chasing him on foot. Good heavens he was going to the back yard! However, what for?! Then we realised that his aim was Mr

Robinson's new car. Suddenly, it came home to us, we have to take some action otherwise it will be rather late. Well, Tony and Sarah went to fetch help while the rest of us will try to delay him. We ran after him and to our delight we saw that Mr Robinson and his guest has noticed some strange noises in the back yard and coming out to check it. They caught him red handed with their video set in his handbag.

#### Text 9

There was five children enjoying their time, riding their byciclen on the grass. Suddenly one of them noticed that a man, looks like a theif, was trying to jimp over a fence of a house. They stoped their playing and started watching him.

The theif jumped, and walked towards a place where he kept a bag in it. He took the bag and got out of the garden and then walked away.

At that time, one of the children run and informed two persons who were around. The rest of them kept watching the theife.

After the theif has left the garden. He aimed to hide the bag again, but this time outside the garden, inside some plants.

It did not take long until the boy came back with the two men. The man was caught, and the children were happy. They run to help the two men in catching the theif.

#### Text 10

Few children were spending a day out, enjoying themselves and rideing their bicas suddnley one of them shouted and point his figure at a person jumping over a house fence; "Look I think that this man is trying to break into the house; he must be a theif, we must do something about it, the other childom said; yes that is truth, let us go and inform the neighbours, "I know two of them who are living nearby", said a child

Evidently the man was a theif and the shoutting of the children attracted his attention; I must hrrey, I better get away with the stuf that I have got! meanwhile some of the children kept hideing and watching the man, the other just ridding ther biks, they were looking for a help and they thought they know, they looken for the neighbours which they recognize that they living next door, and told them about some of their friends are still watching the man, the neighbours two of them rushed and got hold of the man who for a distance away from the house and apparntely he had TV set in his hadbag, actually he caught red-handed.

## Text 11

In a sunny beautiful day, David Erik, Mike, Chris and Paul were cycling around their houses in Ayrshire enjoying the holiday which has just started. While they were cycling round the Smith's house Mike saw a strange man wandering about. He drew his friend's attention to that and they all decided to watch him because they knew that the house's owners were on holiday. The strange man jumped over the fence of the big garden and went inside the house. The children kept a close eye on him and some minutes later they saw him coming out of the garden carrying a handbag. They decided to keep following him because they had a feeling that he was trying on the other side of the house. They rode their bikes as fast as they could. They got it right, the man was examining the the car closely as if he was trying to break into it. Suddenly, two men appeared and caught the man from behind before he was able to do anything. The two men were the gardners of the house. The five children came quickly to give them a help.

#### Appendix (4)

##### Text A

Five children are playing as racing bikes out in the fields. All five are enjoying themselves. They pause for a while on top of a small hill, and one of the boys points towards a row of houses where a man is walking along the fence at the back. Unaware that he has been seen, the man climbs over the fence into the back garden of one of the houses, while the children watch. Then he runs towards the back door of the house.

The children stay on top of the hill, watching, and after a while they see the man come out. He is carrying a large bag, which he has obviously stolen. As he walks away the children set off on their bikes to tell someone.

From behind a fence, they can see the burglar hiding the bag and its contents away some bushes nearby. Then, two grown-ups warned by the children arrive upon the scene and catch the burglar. During the struggle, the bag bursts open and a stolen video recorder falls out. The five children have watched the whole thing from the distance.

##### Text B

The "BMX gang" were out cycling on waste ground behind their houses. Everyone was having fun and not a single cloud was to be seen in the sky.

Suddenly "curley" noticed the local villain Nick McGuinness acting suspiciously at the back of the housing estate. The other children watched intently as Nick jumped over the perimeter fence into one of the gardens.

The curiosity of the children being aroused they hid under a tree and waited for Nick to return.

Nick returned carrying a bag and headed off again back down the road. The children followed Nick whilst one member of the gang went for assistance. The gang watched as Nick hid his bag in the bushes and some thought that he could escape in his car which was parked just over the fence.

However help was at hand as two passers-by, alerted by the children grabbed Nick before he could make good his escape. The bag which Nick had been carrying was found to contain a brand new compact disc player.

##### Text C

On a pleasant day, warm summer day five children decide to go to the local park



with their bikes. Riding to the crest of a hill the eldest boy, Brian, spotted a stranger lurking near the back gardens of a row of terraced houses at the edge of the playing fields. He (Brian) shouted to his friends and indicated the suspicious behaviour of the man. The very next moment the stranger looked furtively about him and climbed over the fence of the second house. The children stayed out of sight and kept silent. The stranger proceeded to break into the empty house and disappeared from sight. When he next appeared he was carrying a large canvas bag and, having mounted the fence, made off in the direction of a small group of trees about a hundred yards away. All this time the five children (four boys and a girl) had been trailing the thief. When he eventually stopped at a clump of bushes and attempted to conceal his loot, obviously to come back to collect it later on, while he was thus engaged the children had contacted two neighbours of the burgled house and informed them of the theft. Consequently, the burglar had no time to hide the hi-fi which he had stolen, before he was wrestled to the ground by two burly agents of justice.

#### Text D

Five children were out riding on their bicycles one day. They were having great fun playing on the hill when suddenly one of them noticed a man walking past a row of houses. The man who was somewhat burly with short, black hair wore a dark jacket and jersey with light trousers. He climbed over one of the garden fences. Later the children saw the same man walking away from the houses, carrying a full holdall.

Naturally, the children were suspicious and, deciding to survey the man's actions, followed him on foot. They watched him walk along the road beside the fence. Next, he covered in some bushes and appeared to be looking over a fence at a car which was parked outside one of the houses.

Suddenly, two others grabbed the suspicious looking man from behind, taking him by surprise. As his bag fell open it revealed what may have been electrical goods. In order to satisfy their curiosity or perhaps to report what they had seen the children ran forward to the scene of the struggle.

#### Text E

The five children decided to spend a day at at the park, and the best way to do this was bicycle. Coming weekly to a housing estate one of the children notices a man acting strangely at the back of one of the two houses. They watched the man for little longer and sure enough the man climbed over the back of one of the houses and broke in. Soon they him leave the house carrying a heavily bag, so they decided to

follow him to see where he was going. As he walked away and seemed to be about to make an escape with what was obviously something stolen from the house, they rode away to get some help in catching him. They waited behind a fence and watched the thief as he surveyed another potential house he could break into, and eventually the help they had gone to get came, chased the thief, and overpowered him.

#### Text F

It is a beautiful, warm summer's day and school has just broken up, a group of children are going out for a ride on their bikes. From the top of the hill they spot a man hanging-around the house at the bottom of the hill. They do not recognize the man and they know that he doesn't live in the area. They think this is suspicious. They see the man break-into the house then jump-over the fence and run away. The man is carrying a large bag. The children chase after the man on their bikes. They are very fit and they are soon able to catch-up with the thief. They jump off their bikes and watch the man run towards a car. They run after him. Two of the boys catch-up with the man and grab him by the arms. The bag falls to the ground and video recorder can be seen inside it. The man looks surprised and very angry but the children are very pleased with themselves.

#### Text G

A group of school children are playing together on their bikes, all about the same age. These are five of them, four boys and a girl. From the top of a hill, they notice a man wandering around the back of a row of terraced houses. For some reason, his presence worries them. While they are watching, they see him climb over the fence, into the back garden of one of the houses. The fence presents no barrier to him. Standing in a row above the houses, the children watch him. He dashes towards the house, with his back to them. They see him leaning carrying a hold-all in his hand. Still watching him, the children cycle down the hill. They keep their eyes on his retreating back. From behind the fence they watch him rummaging about in the bushes behind the houses. Two men appear and grab the first man. His open bag reveals a recorder, and the children run excitedly out from their hiding place.

#### Text H

One day five children were out on their bicycles. Four of them were boys and one was a girl. As they were playing on a grassy bank one of the boys noticed a man standing outside a terrace of houses. He pointed the man out to the other children,

They all stopped playing and watched the man. He was climbing over a fence into the garden of one of the houses. The children stood and watched the man head towards the house. He was wearing a black sweater and jacket and white trousers. Later they saw him outside the garden. He was carrying a bag that had not been visible earlier. The children followed him on their bikes as he walked along carrying the bag. Eventually he stopped and they guessed that he was hiding the bag, and rushed off to tell their parents, what they had seen. Their fathers went to where the man was crouching and grabbed hold of him. As his bag fell to the floor a video recorder fell out.

#### Text I

One warm summer's day the children were playing on their bicycles on the hill behind their street. They were having a great time racing and jumping over the bumpy ground.

As they reached the edge of the hill over looking the back of their houses, Tom noticed a man he hadn't seen before walking past the end of Mrs Johnstone's garden. Tom stopped and pointed-out the man to the others.

Whilst the children watched, the man scrambled over Mrs Johnstone's fence. The children weren't quite sure what they ought to do. They stood and stared as the man raced across Mrs Johnstone's back garden towards her back door. They watched him slip inside the house.

The children decided to wait and see if the man came out again. They got off their bikes and lay down at the crest of the hill-a few minutes later the man emerged from Mrs Johnstone's house carrying a holdall.

Tom and Simon rode off to tell Simon's dad what they had just seen. The rest of the children followed a little way behind the man.

By the time Tom and Simon caught up with the others, they were hiding again. This time they could see the man trying to hide the holdall under some bushes at the end of the row of houses.

Just then Simon's dad and Mr Johnstone arrived. They grabbed hold of the man-who dropped his bag-and all the children ran out to see if they could help.

#### Text J

Charlie and his friends were having a wild time on the hill behind their houses. They were enjoying a 'dirt-tracking' game on their BMX bikes. Suddenly Charlie's friend Sam pointed down the hill at a man, who was walking slowly past the third house from the end of the row. "Who is he?" asked one of the kids. Nobody had a

clue.

The children watched in astonishment as the man suddenly leapt over fence, and ran across the grass towards the house. Charlie felt that he should do something, but felt unable to move. None of his friends moved either. The man reappeared from the house, now carrying a heavy travel bag, which seemed to contain something rather bulky.

As the man walked away, Charlie and his friends crept down the hill with their bikes. The man disappeared round a corner, and the children rushed to the end of the fence, keen now to see where he would go.

They stood in silence and watched as the man buried the valise under some bushes next to the parking lot fence.

Suddenly, there was a shout, and two men leapt over the parking lot fence. The man at the bushes seemed unable to move. Only at the last moment did he struggle to his feet. It was too late. His captors were upon him.

Charlie and his friends found their legs. They ran, breathlessly, toward the struggling group.

#### Text K

Some children are playing on bicycles. From the top of the hill on which they are playing they can see a man walking by the fence surrounding some houses. One of the children points him out. As they watch they see him climb over one of the fences, and make towards the house. The man is wearing a black jumper and jacket. As the children continue to watch the man they see him come out of the house, carrying something in a bag that he did not have when he went in. The man obviously being a burglar. Being suspicious of the man the children continue to follow him on their bikes. The man is still walking near the houses, the man has not seen the children. Hiding behind a fence they watch as the man goes towards another house, but the children have alerted other people to the fact that this man is around, and two men catch him before he can go into the house. In the struggle that follows he drops the bag that he was carrying, bursting open to reveal what it was that he had stolen from the house.

## Appendix (5)

### Text 1

William Shakespeare is the eldest son of Jhon Shakespeare who married from Mary Arden in 1557 and got eight children bu only four sons and one daughter survived. He worked as a dealer and died in 1601.

William Shakespeare has born on 23 of april 1564 and baptized in Holy Trinity church at Stratford-Upon-Avon. He was educated at the local grammer school. And was the schoolmaster in the Country in the beginig of his work life, after that he turned to work in the poet and theater and most of his theater work was in London where he used to be one of the men whor are working for Lord Chamberlain.

He married Anne Hathaway on 28 November in 1582 and got two daughters and on boy. His eldest daughter Susanna was born on 1583. She married John Hall who was physician in 1607 and got one daughter Elizabeth Hall. Hamnet whe is the only son of William died in 1596 and buried in Holy Trinity church yard. Judith the second daughter of William married in 1616 to Thomas Quine. After only three months William Shakespeare died and that was eight years after his mother's death.

### Text 2

William Shakespeare born on 23rd April 1564 and died on 23rd April 1616, baptized and burried in the same city Trinity.

He was the eldest son of John Shakespeare, who was working as a dealer. His wife was Mary Arden who married her on 1557, she brought for him eight children.

William was one of the five children (four sons and one daughter) whom survived, he recieved his education in a local grammar school, in 1582 he married Anne Hathaway on 28th Nov, and he's got from her three children (two girls and one boy) Susann was the eldest daughter born in 1583, and married in 1607 from John Hall, who was physician , the couple got one daughter Elizabeth hall.

Hamnet and Judith were twin; they born in 1585 Hamnet died in 1596, buried in trinity churchyard, his daughter the second one Judith married Thomas Quiney in 1616.

He worked in his early life as a schoolmaster in the country, and later on, as a man of theatre and poet, most of his work centered in London, he worked with the Lord chamberlain's men (London's leading company, occupying the Globe).

During his life his father died in 1601, and his mother died in 1608. She burried in the same place of William's in Holy Trinity.

### Text 3

The dealer John Shakespeare had been married in 1557, to Mary Arden. And as the big family is that time, John Shakespeare have got eight children, out of whom five survived (four sons and one daughter).

The eldest son for John Shakespeare was born on 28 of April 1564 in Stratford-Upon-Avon, and they called him William, after 3 days and in the same city, in Holy Trinity church William was baptized.

In the earlier years William was received his education at the local grammar school, and after he finished his education, he appointed as scholar in the country; and later on, a man of theatre and poet.

In 1582 and on 28 of November, William had been maird to Anne Hathaway, in present of his famely, after one year just he had get the first chiled, she was a girl and he called her Susanna, later after 2 years he had get twins, and he called them Hammet and Judith.

During his life, his theatrical life centred in London, as Lord Chamberlain's men, and later, during the years between 1596-1616, was very bad for him, he losted his son Hammet which he buried in Holy Trinity churchyard, after 4 following years his father also died.

May be the only two things were good to him, are his two daughters'S maird, the oldest one Susanna had been married to the physicians John Hall in 1607, and they had got the only William's granddaughter Elizabeth Hall, and the second daughter Judith had been married to Thomas Quiney in 1616, but between this two marieds his mother was died in 1608.

The final year for William was 1616 when he died on 23 of April, and his buried was same, as all his family, in Holy Trinity.

### Text 4

William Shakespeare was born on the 23 of April 1564. He baptized on 26 of April 1564 in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-Upon-Avon. He is the eldest son of John Shakespeare. Jhon Shakespeare worked as a dealer. He married Mary Arden in 1557. John Shakeseare has got eight children, out of whom five survived. They were four sons and one daughter.

William Shakespeare received his education at the local granmar school. He got married on 28 of November 1582 from Anne Hathaway. He had three children two of them were girls. The eldest daughter was born in 1583. Her name was Susanna. Hammet and Judith were born in 1585. They were twins. William worked as a schoolmaster in the

country. Later on he becomes man of theatre and poet. His theatrical life centred in London. He worked after that with the lord Chamberlain's men. In 1596 his son Hamnet died and buried in Holy Trinity churchyard. William's father died in 1601. In 1607 Susanna married a physician. His name is John Hall. Susanna had a daughter called Elizabeth Hall. In 1608 William's mother died.

She buried in Holy Trinity. In 1616 February Judith was married from Thomas Quiney. In 1616 on the 23 of April William died. He buried near his mother in Holy Trinity.

#### Text 5

John Shakespeare is a dealer who married Mary Arden at 1557. John and Mary got eight children, out of whom five survivor (four sons and one daughter). One of the lucky survived sons was their oldest son William. he was born on 23 April in 1564, on 26 April 1564 they took him to Holy Trinity church in Stratford-Upon Avon to be baptized. And when he was old enough they sent him to the local grammar school to receive his education

On 28 November 1582 William got married to Anne Hathaway by whom he got three children (two girls and one boy) Susanna who was born on 1583 and the twins Hamnet and Judith who were born in 1585 William started his career early in his life as a schoolmaster in the country but later he moved to London to work in theatre with the Lord Chamberlain's men The Lord Chamberlain's men was the leading company occupying the Globe. William was a poet as well. after 1596 William faced many sad and happy events.

in 1596 he lost his son and buried him in Holy Trinity churchyard. After five year his father was died in 1608 his mother mary was died and buried in Holy Trinity.. on 1607 his daughter Susan got married a physician whom name is John Hall. Susan and John gave william his only granddaughter Elizabeth Hall.

and in Feburary 1616 his other daughter Judith got marreid by Thome Quiney. william's life was ended by his death in in his fifty second's birthday and buried in the charch wher he was baptized 52 years before the Holy Trinity

#### Text 6

William Shakespeare was born on the twenty-third of April, 1564. The eldest son of John Shakespeare, William was baptized on the twenty sixth of April, 1564 in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-Upon-Avon.

His father worked as a dealer. Married to Mary Arden in 1557, he got eight

children, out of whom five survived (four sons and one daughter).

William Shakespeare received education at the local grammar school. He married Anne Hathaway on the twenty-eighth of November 1582. They got three children; two girls and one boy. Susanna, the eldest daughter, was born in 1583. Hamnet and Judith were twins and were born in 1585.

Early in his life, William Shakespeare worked as a schoolmaster in the Country. Later on, he became a man of theatre and a poet. His theatrical life centred in London, where he worked with the Lord Chamberlain's men, London's leading company then, who occupied the Globe.

In 1596, Shakespeare's son Hamnet died, and was buried in Holy Trinity church. In 1601, his father died. His daughter, Susanna, married a physician, John Hall, in 1607. His daughter brought into the world Shakespeare's only granddaughter, Elizabeth Hall. In 1608, Shakespeare's mother died, and was buried in Holy Trinity. His second daughter Judith, married Thomas Quiney on February, 1616. In the same year, on the 23rd of April, Shakespeare died, and was buried in Holy Trinity.

#### Text 7

William Shakespeare was born on the 23rd of April 1564, he got baptized on the 26th of April 1564 in the Holy Trinity church in Stratford-Upon-Avon.

He was the eldest son of a dealer called John Shakespeare.

John married in 1557 Mary Arden, they had eight children and were left with five survived.

William got educated at the local grammar school.

In 1582, he married Anne Hathaway from whom he got three children (two girls and one boy); his oldest daughter, Susanna was born in 1583, where Hamnet and Judith who were twins were born in 1585.

William started off working as a schoolmaster in the country, he moved later in his life to the area of theatre and poems where he needed to go to London and start working with the Lord Chamberlain's men (London's leading company)

In 1596, William's only son, Hamnet died and was buried in the Holy Trinity churchyard. Five years later his father died.

In 1607, Susanna got married to a physical, called John Hall, then gave birth to William's only granddaughter, Elizabeth Hall.

His mother died in 1608 and was buried in the same churchyard.

Before he died and was buried in the Holy Trinity churchyard in 1616, his second daughter, Judith married Thomas Quiney.



### Text 8

When John Shakespeare who works as a dealer married in 1557 did not know that this date will be that important for everybody to remember. Furthermore, they didn't imagine that the date of the birth of their eldest son will be quite an important date in the theatre history. 23rd of April 1564 William Shakespeare was born, then was baptised on the 26th of April of the same year in Holy Trinity church in his home town Stratford-Upon-Avon. He was the eldest son amongst eight children, out of whom five survived (four sons and one daughter). William received his education at the local grammar school to become a schoolmaster in the country early in his life. However, he was keen on theatre and poet, so later on he became a man of theatre and poet. Actually, his theatrical life was centred in London, where he worked with the Lord Chamberlain's men.

He was married at the age of 18 to Anne Hathaway who gave him a daughter in 1583, Susanna, and twins Hamnet and Judith in 1585. Hamnet died at the age of 11. Five years later William lost his father. In 1607 Susanna his eldest daughter was married to a physician, John Hall, and delighted William with his only granddaughte Elizabeth Hall. His second daughter Judith married in 1616 to Thomas Quiney. William died in 1616 and buried in Holy Trinity where his son, father and mother were burried as well.

### Text 9

William Shakespeare, the famous man of letters, was born in 23 of April 1564. He was baptized on 26 April 1564 in Holy Trinity church of Stratford-Upon-Avon.

William is the eldest son of John and Mary Arden, who got eight children, out of whom five survived (four sons and one daughter). John, his father, worked a dealer.

As far as William's education is concerned, he was in the local grammar school, and when he was 18, he married Anne Hathaway.

After a year of their marriage(1583), they got their eldest daughter Susanna, they had twins also, Hamnet and Judith. The career of William was changed from school master in the country, to a theatre and poet man, but his theatrical life centred only in London, where he worked with the Lord Chamberlain's men.

In 1596 William's son; Hamnet; died and buried in Holy Trinity churchyard. After 5 years, his fath also died. When Susanna; William's daughter; was 24, She was married to a physician called John Hall. They had only one daughter Elizabeth. One year later (1608); William's mother died and buried in Holy Trinity.

On February 1616, William's daughter Judith was married to Thomas Quiney, just one month before the death of her father.

#### Text 10

Nobody could ever guess that on the 23 April 1564, a great poet, theatre writer, was born.

John, the father was a dealer, It looks to me that he had nothing to do with literature three days after his birth he was baptized in Holy Trinity church. Shakespeare was the eighth child, three children died, Mary Shakespeare mother should have been a heart-broken person.

William received his education at the local grammar school in 1582 he got married to Anne Hathaway. He was blessed with three children; two girls and one boy, the girl Susanna married John Hall a physician, his son Hamnet died in 1596.

William started his career as a school master in country, It did not take him long to start his theatrical life in London. He worked with the Lord Chamberlain's men for a while.

In 1601 his father died seven years later his mother died. Few months after the marriage of his second daughter Judith to Thomas Quiney, William died on April 1616. All of them were buried in Holy Trinity near the church where William was baptized on the same month.

#### Text 11

William Shakespeare was born on the 23rd of April in 1564, the eldest son of John Shakespeare and Mary Arden. He was the eldest of eight children out of whom only five survived. He was baptized on 26 April 1564 in Holy Trinity church, Stratford-upon-Avon. He went to the local grammar school. In 28th of Nov. 1582, he got married to Anne Hathaway who gave birth to 3 children, Susanna, Hamnet and Judith.

Early in his life, William Shakespeare worked as a school master in the country later on, he became a poet and a great dramatist of his age. His theatrical career was based in London and he worked with the Lord Chamberlain's men who were occupying the Globe at that time.

In 1596, Hamnet, his eldest son died at the age of 11 and was buried in Holy Trinity churchyard. In 1601 John Shakespeare died

In 1607 Susanna, his eldest daughter got married to a physician, John Hall and gave birth to daughter, Elizabeth the only granddaughter of William Shakespeare.

1608 Mary Arden, Shakespeare's mother, died and was buried in Holy Trinity. 1616

Judith, youngest daughter, got married to Thomas Quiney. Later in the same year 1616  
William shakespeare died and was buried in Holy Trinity.

## Appendix (6)

### Text A

William Shakespeare was born on the 23rd April 1564, and was baptised three days later in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-Upon-Avon. He was the eldest son of John Shakespeare, a dealer, and of Mary Arden. They were married in 1557, and of their eight children only five survived -four boys and one girl.

The young William was educated at Stratford Grammar School and became a country schoolmaster before going on to London to work with the Lord Chamberlain's Company at the Globe Theatre there. On November 28th 1582 he married Ann Hathaway, and the first of their three children (a daughter, Susanna) was born in 1583, followed in 1585 by twins, Hamnet and Judith. Hamnet did not live to be an adult, but died in 1596 at the age of eleven. The playwright father died five years later.

In 1607, the first of Shakespeare's two daughters, Susanna, married a local physician, John Hall, and gave birth to a daughter, Elizabeth. In the following year his mother died. Eight years later his second daughter, Judith, married Thomas Quiney. Only two months later, on April 23rd, William himself died and was buried, like his mother in Holy Trinity Church.

### Text B

William Shakespeare the eminent playwright was born on the 23rd of April 1564 the eldest son of John and Mary Shakespeare (formerly Arden). William one of eight children out of whom five survived, (four sons and one daughter) was baptised on April 26th 1564 in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-Upon-Avon. John Shakespeare who worked as a dealer died in 1601 and Mary in 1608 and were buried in Holy Trinity Church.

William married Anne Hathaway on 28th November 1582. They had three children, Susanna born in 1583 and twins Hamnet and Judith born in 1585. In 1596 Hamnet died and was buried in the family churchyard. Susanna (Williams daughter) married physician John Hall in 1607 and produced Williams only granddaughter Elizabeth Hall. His second daughter Judith married Thomas Quiney in February 1616.

William received his education at the local grammar school and became a schoolmaster in the country early in his life. He went on to become a man of the theatre and a poet his theatrical life centring in London. William worked with London's leading company "Lord Chamberlains men" occupying the Globe theatre.

After a distinguished career in the theatre William died on the 23rd of April 1616 and was buried in the family churchyard, Holy Trinity, Stratford-Upon-Avon.

### Text C

William Shakespeare, eldest son of John Shakespeare and Mary Arden, was born on the 23rd of April 1564 and died on the same day in 1616. He was baptised three days after birth in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-Upon-Avon and was buried in the same place. His father, a dealer, married his mother in 1557 and their marriage produced eight children (four sons and a daughter survived). John Shakespeare died in 1601 and his wife followed in 1608, and was buried in Holy Trinity Church. William himself married Anne Hathaway on the 28th of November 1582. Their eldest daughter Susanna (born in 1583) married John Hall, a physician, in 1607 and her father's only granddaughter, Elizabeth, was a product of their marriage. His second daughter, Judith, was born in 1585 and married Thomas Quiney in February 1616. Her twin, Hamnet, died in 1596 and is buried, like his father, in Holy Trinity Church-yard.

William was educated at the local grammar school and, as a young man worked as a schoolmaster in the counter. Subsequently, he worked in the theatre in London for the Lord Chamberlain's men. This company, the leading one in the capital, occupied the Globe Theatre. Shakespeare is also renowned as a poet.

### Text D

John Shakespeare was a dealer by trade. In 1557 he married Mary Arden and, during their marriage, the couple had eight children only five of whom survived.

William Shakespeare, one of four sons, was born on 23rd April 1564. He was educated at the local grammar school and initially worked as a country schoolmaster. Later, William became a poet and actor. This latter career was centred round London where he worked with the Lord Chamberlain's men in the city's Globe Theatre.

William married Anne Hathaway on 28th November 1582. The couples' first child, a girl named Susanna, was born in 1583. She later married John Hall, a physician, and gave birth to William's only granddaughter, Elizabeth.

In 1585 Anne gave birth to twins Hamnet and Judith. In 1616, their second daughter married Thomas Quiney. However, Williams only son did not reach maturity and was buried at the age of nine in Holy Trinity Churchyard.

In 1601 John Shakespeare died and was followed seven years later by his wife. William himself died in 1616 and was buried with his parents, in the same graveyard as his son.

### Text E

the life of William Shakespeare was based around entertainment and the arts, even though he started out his career as as a school master, and his father's influence as a dealer didn't encourage Shakespeare's later theatrical and literate life. Most of his life was centred around London, where he worked with the Lord Chamberlain's men (London's leading company occupying the Globe)

Born on the 23of Apeil 1564, and baptized on the 26th April 1564 as William Shakespeare, son of John Shakespeare. His father, who was married in 1557 to Mary Eden, sent William to be educated at a local grammar school, along with three brothers and one sister, of which he was the eldest.

Shakespeare was married on the 28th of November to Anne Hathaway and got 3 children, Susanna the eldest born in 1583, and the twins Hamnet and Judith born in 1585. Unfortunately Hamnet died at the age of 11 just 5 years before William's father was to die as well, in 1601. In 1607 Susanna married the Physician John Hall, and they produced William's only grandchild- Elizabeth Hall. A year later after the marriage of his daughter his mother died, buried in the Holy Trinity Church. In Feburary 1616 William was to see his daughter married to Thomas Quiney. Two months later on April 23rd William's died and was buried in the same church as his father.

### Text F

William Shakes was born on the 23rd of April, 1564 and was baptized 3 days later in Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-Upon-Avon. He was the eldest of five surviving children, out of the original eight. He was the eldest of the four sons.

William's father, John worked as a dealer and married Mary Arden in 1551.

William was educated in the local grammar school. He married Anne Hathaway on the 28th of November 1582 and they had three children, two girls and one boy. The eldest daughter, Susanna, was born in 1583 and the twins, Hamnet and Judith, were born two years later.

William started his career as a schoolmaster in the country and later turned to theatre and poetry. His theatrical career was centred in London where he worked with the Lord Chamberlain's men, London's leading company occupying the Globe.

In 1596 William's son Hamnet died and was buried in Holy Trinity Churchyard. Five years later his father died.

In 1601 William's daughter, Susanna, married a physician, John Hall. She later gave birth to a daughter, Elizabeth.

William's mother died in 1608 and was buried beside her husband in Holy Trinity.

In February 1616 his second daughter, Judith, married Thomas Quiney.

William died on the 23rd of April 1616 and was buried in Holy Trinity Churchyard.

#### Text G

Shakespeare's father, John Shakespeare was a dealer by trade, and married Mary Arden in 1557. They had eight children, of whom five survived- four sons and one daughter. William Shakespeare was born on the 23rd of April 1564 and baptized in Holy Trinity Church on the 26th of the same month. He was educated at the local grammar school and in 1582, he married Anne Hathaway on 28 November. They have three children: their eldest daughter, Susanna, was born in 1583, and in 1585 Anne produced twins, a girl and a boy, Judith and Hamnet. Shakespeare's career as a playwright did not take off immediately. Early in his working life, he taught as a master in a country school. In later life, his career as a poet and his involvement in the theatre centred in London, and he worked with London's leading theatrical company, the Lord Chamberlain's men, in the Globe.

His son Hamnet died in 1596, and was buried in Holy Trinity churchyard. Five years later, in 1601, his father's death is recorded. In 1607 Anne and William's eldest daughter, Susanna, married John Hall, a physician. The couple produced William Shakespeare's only granddaughter, Elizabeth Hall. His mother died in the year 1608, and was also buried in the churchyard of Holy Trinity. In the February of 1616, Shakespeare's second daughter, Judith, married Thomas Quiney, and in the April of that same year- April 23, 1616- William Shakespeare died, and was buried in the church where he had been christened, and where his parents, and his son, already lay.

#### Text H

William Shakespeare was born on 23rd April 1564, and baptized on 26th April in Holy Trinity church, Stratford-Upon-Avon. He was the eldest son of John Shakespeare, a dealer, and Mary Arden who were married in 1557. Although they had eight children only five survived, leaving William with four brothers and one sister.

William was educated at the local grammar school, and married Anne Hathaway on 28th November 1582. They had three children, Susanna, who was born in 1583, and Hamnet and Judith, twins who were born in 1585.

In his early life William was a schoolmaster in the country, but he later went to London where he earned a living in the theater and as a poet. He worked with London's leading company, the Lord Chamberlain's men, who were based at the Globe

Theatre.

William's son Hamnet died in 1596 and was buried in the churchyard where was baptized. His father died in 1601 and his mother in 1608. She was also buried in Holy Trinity.

In 1607 William's eldest daughter Susanna married a physician John Hall, and in feb. 1616, his remaining child, Judith, married Thomas Quiney. William had only one grandchild, Elizabeth, the daughter of Susanna. He died on 23rd April 1616 and was buried alongside his son and mother.

### Text I

William Shakespeare was born on 23rd April 1564, the eldest son of John and Mary Shakespeare. William was the first of eight children, five of whom survived- William, his three brothers and one sister. William was baptized on 26th April 1564, in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-Upon-Avon.

William received his education at the local grammar school, and in later life went on to be a schoolmaster himself. However, he went on to become a man of the theatre, and a poet- becoming involved with the theatrical life of London. Indeed, William Shakespeare worked with London's leading company, the Lord Chamberlain's men, based at the Globe Theatre.

On 28th November 1582, William married Anne Hathaway, by whom he had three children- Susanna (born in 1583) and twins Hamnet and Judith (born in 1585). Eleven years later, in 1596, William's only son (Hamnet) died, and was buried in the churchyard of Holy Trinity.

In 1601 John Shakespeare, William's father, died- and he was followed in 1608 by William's mother. Between the deaths of William's parents, in 1607, William's eldest daughter -Susanna- married a physician called John Hall . They were to provide William's only granddaughter, Elizabeth Hall.

In February 1616, William's second daughter, Judith, married Thomas Quiney. Yet on 23rd April in the same year, William Shakespeare died, and he was later buried in the same churchyard as both his son and mother, that of Holy Trinity Church.

### Text J

William Shakespeare, born in 1564 to a dealer in the town of Stratford-Upon-Avon, was one of a large mixed family, three of whom died in infancy. Despite his education at a local grammar school, and his seemingly modest beginnings as a country schoolmaster, he rose to become a celebrated figure in the theatrical and poetic



worlds. This natural leaning towards the stage led him to London, where he worked with the leading theatrical company, the Lord Chamberlain's men. William was married in 1582 to Anne Hathaway, and together they had two girls and a boy; Susanna, the eldest, and the twins Hamnet and Judith.

His family, sadly, did not all survive him. He lost his son Hamnet in 1596, and later both his daughters died within a decade of each other.

William died in 1616, to be buried in the yard of the church he was baptized in: Holy Trinity, in Stratford-Upon-Avon.

#### Text K

William Shakespeare was born on 23 April 1564, the eldest son of John Shakespeare, a dealer, and Mary Arden, in a family of four sons and one daughter. He was baptized at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford. He received his education at the local grammar school. His early career was as a schoolmaster, later travelling to London, working in the theatre with the Lord Chamberlains men at the Globe. In 1582 he married Anne Hathaway, his eldest daughter Susanna was born in 1583, two years later the twins Hamnet and Judith were born. Hamnet dying in 1596, was buried in Holy Trinity Churchyard. His father died in 1601 and seven years later his mother died. In 1607, Susanna married, John Hall, a physician, providing Shakespeare with his only granddaughter Elizabeth, his other daughter married Thomas Quiney in 1616. Shakespeare died in April 1616, as was also buried in Holy Trinity churchyard.

**Text 1**

اتفق جماعة من الأطفال على الذهاب إلى خارج المدينة برحلة صغيرة على الدراجات العادية. حيث كان الجو طلق والهواء عليل وذلك في أوائل فصل الربيع، خرجوا معاً صباح أحد أيام الجمعة ليتمتعوا بذلك المناخ الرائع. وفي الطريق وعندما أشرفوا على أحد البيوت المتطرف في جوانب إحدى القرى لاحظ أحدهم أن أحد الرجال يحاول الدخول إلى هذا البيت من فوق السور مما جعلهم يظنون بأنه أحد اللصوص. لذلك وبعد أن تأكدوا أنه فعلاً يبدووا كاللصوص اتفقوا أن يذهب بعضهم لإخبار رجال الشرطة وأن يبقى الآخرون في مراقبة اللص المتوقع. وبسرعة شديدة تسلق اللص ذلك السور ودخل البيت وأخذ حقيبة وفيها ما خف حمله وعلى ثمنه وفر هارباً، ولكن الأطفال المراقبون أخذوا يسيكون له فناً ليلقوا القبض عليه وأخذوا يذهبون باتجاهات مختلفة ليقطعوا عليه كافاً طرق الهروب. في ذلك الحين كان رجال الشرطة قد حضروا معهم وأحاطوا له ما يوقعه في الفخ ولما حاول الهروب من أحد الطرقات وجددهم أمامه وألقوا القبض عليه وأخذوه في سيارتهم في نزهة إلى قسم الشرطة وكان ذلك بفضل وعي هؤلاء الأولاد الصغار.

**Text 2**

في صباح يوم ربيعي والأطفال يلعبون في ساحة البلدة، حيث كانوا يتسابقون على دراجاتهم فرحين، وبينما هم في غمرة غيبتهم وإذا بهم يلمحون رجلاً غريب يقترب من منزل عائلة الموالدي. عادل صرخ بالاصدقاء يا أولاد انظروا من هناك؟!!!  
بالعجب ذلك الغريب يحاول أن يقفز من فوق السور من هو ذلك الشخص أهو لص؟! رجل غريب الملامح يركض متنكراً باتجاه إحدى النوافذ التي كان قد نسيها أصحاب الدار مفتوحة.  
الأطفال مندشمين مما يرون إنه لص تسلل إلى البيت وسرق شيئاً وضعه في حقيبة يد وولى فراً، هنا هرع الأطفال بدراجاتهم يتبعون آثار خطاه دون أن يثيروا شكوكه فيما إذا كان أحداً ملاحقه.  
وبينما كان يحاول الفرار انقسم الأطفال إلى فريقين قسم لمتابعته وقسم لتبليغ الشرطة، حيث نجحوا بالوصول إلى المفزة وأخبار عناصر الأمن حيث هرع اثنان من ضباط الأمن وطلبوا من الأطفال أن يرشدوهم إلى مكان اللص. حيث كان الآخرون يتبعون اللص في كل حركة يتحركها، وفي الوقت المناسب نجح الجهاز الأمني في القبض على ذلك اللص، لقد تمكن اللص من سرقة جهاز المسجل الثمين SONY. صاح الأطفال فرحين فقد ساهموا في مساعدة جهاز الأمن وهنا تقدم الملازم عصام من الأطفال حيث شكرهم وأثنى عليهم بوعيهم المبكر وأخبرهم بأن العدالة دائماً بالمرصاد لأولئك الذين يحاولون أن يخرجوا عن طريق الصواب.  
وعاد الأطفال إلى لعبهم وقلوبهم ملأى بالغبطة والسرور.

**Text 3**

في احدى أيام العطلة الصيفية، محمد، مصطفى، سامر، عادل، وليلى، كل منهم قد اخذ دراجته وخرجوا لقضاء بعض الوقت في سباق وبينما هم في غمرة السباق واذ سامر يصرخ بهم، انظروا الى ذلك الشخص الذي يحاول الدخول الى بيت العم فراس من فوق السياج.

وبدا الاطفال الخمس ينظرون الى ذلك الشخص ويتابعونه بنظراته حتى رأوه يدخل الى المنزل من النافذة. وخرج منها بحقيبة ثقيلة. ثم حاول الركض مبتعداً عن المنزل. عندها، أخذ كل طفل دراجته مسرعاً، ليخبروا بعض افراد اسرتهم عن ما حدث في بيت العم فراس. وبالفعل عندما سمعوا ما قاله الاطفال اسرع والد محمد، وعادل ليروا إذا كان بالامكان الامساك بهذا الشخص الغريب.

وبالفعل وبينما هو يعجل بالخروج وللحاق بسيارته الراكنة في مكان قريب من بيت العم فراس امسكا به وبينما هما يحاولان السيطرة عليه وقعت الحقيبة من يده وظهر منها فيديو العم فراس في الحقيبة. وهكذا ساقا الرجل وما معه الى مخفر الشرطة لعمل اللازم هناك. وعاد الاطفال لاكمال سباقهم وهم فرحين لما عملوه في مساعدة الشرطة في الامساك بهذا اللص الغريب.

**Text 4**

في يوم من الأيام كان الأطفال يتسابقون على الدراجات العادية في ساحة البلدة، وبينما هم يتسابقون بهرح وسرور شاهدوا رجلاً غريباً يقترب من إحدى المنازل بعذر شديد. فإذا به يقفز من فوق السور ويركض بسرعة شديدة باتجاه نافذة المنزل ويدخله. قرر الأطفال أن يوقفوا السباق ويتقربوا هذا الرجل الغريب ليشاهدوا ماذا سيفعل. بعد فترة قصيرة خرج الرجل مسرعاً يحمل بيده حقيبة كبيرة. عندما أسرع أحد الأطفال لإخبار رجال الشرطة بما حصل، بينما لحق الآخرون بالرجل المشتبه ليمنعوه من الفرار بما سرق. في ذلك الوقت شاهد اللص سيارة الشرطة تقف على ناصية الشارع. حاول اللص الفرار بثتى الوسائل من الشرطة، لكن رجال الشرطة كانوا له بالمرصاد وألقوا القبض عليه وامسكوه بالجرم المشهود. ركض الأطفال فرحين بما قدموا من خدمات لحفظ البلدة من هذا اللص حيث أن هذا الرجل كان يتردد بين الحين والآخر الى تلك البلدة لسرقة منازلها. شكر رجال الشرطة الأطفال لتصرفهم الواعي وأعطوهم بعض الهدايا التشجيعية وأعادوا ما سرق اللص إلى المنزل المسروق. بعدها ذهب الأطفال إلى لعبهم فرحين مسرورين.

**Text 5**

في يوم من أيام الربيع الجميلة، حيث السماء صافية والشمس ساطعة والأرض تلبس ثوبها السندي الأخضر. خرج الأطفال «سامر، أحمد،

حكمت، حسان ورباب» على دراجاتهم للتنزه والسباق في هذا الجو الجميل. وفجأة وهم فوق التلة الخضراء المشرفة على المنطقة، وجدوا رجلاً غريباً بالقرب من سور احد المنازل تبدا عليه ملامح الشر والريبة. فوقف الأطفال بهدوء فوق التلة، يراقبونه من بعيد دون أن يشعر بهم. وإذا بالرجل يقفز فوق سور حديقة المنزل. وبينما هم واقفين في اماكنهم مندهشين لحركة هذا الرجل، شاهدوه يركض بخفة وسرعة إلى داخل فناء المنزل. فوقفوا الاطفال متسمرين في اماكنهم. وإذا بالرجل الغريب يخرج ويبيده محفظة مليئة وكبيرة، يمشي بكل ثقة وامان بدون خوف أو وجل. فركب الأطفال دراجاتهم يريدون تعقب خط السارق من بعيد. وعندما شعر السارق أنه مراقب، انحنى إلى الأرض يقطف بعض الاعشاب موهماً سرقة وفجأة رجلان قويان يخرجان له وقد مسكوا يديه مانعيه من الفرار أو الهرب. وعندما شاهد الأطفال أن اللص قد وقع في قبضة الرجلان، احسوا أنهم بأمان وانطلقوا مهلين وفرحين باتجاه السارق.

### ٦٤٤٦

بينما كان خمس أولاد - أربع صبيان وبنت - يتسابقون على الدراجات، شاهد أحدهم شخص غريب يقترب من بيت أحد الجيران. ارتاب الأولاد لرؤية ذلك الشخص قرب المنزل، خاصة وأن أهل البيت قد سافروا ليقضوا عطلتهم الصيفية.

تابع الأولاد مراقبة الغريب، وإذا به يقفز من فوق سور البيت. كان وجه الغريب ذو معالم قاسية: عينان صغيرتان سودوان، أنف كبير وفم مطبق بإحكام....

بعد انتظار، شاهد الأولاد اللص يفادر البيت، ويبيده حقيبة. أسرعوا على دراجاتهم ليخبروا أهلهم بما رؤوا.

كان اللص يخبئ الحقيبة بين شجيرات عندما عاد الأولاد. هم رجلان بالقبض على اللص، بينما ركض الأولاد باتجاههم، مفتبين بما فعلوا.

### ٦٤٤٧

كان اليوم يوم عطلة والأولاد في الحى كالعادة في أيام العطل يمارسون ألعابهم المختلفة، كان هناك مجموعة من الأطفال يمارسون رياضة ركوب الدراجات ويجوبون حارات الضيعة وأزقتها وفجأة لمح أحدهم وهم في أعلى الهضبة عند طرف الضيعة البعيد رجلاً يحاول تسلق السور في بيت مجاور فأشار الصبي لرفاقه لكي ينتبهوا لهذا الرجل.

تناقش الأطفال فيما بينهم وقرروا أن يحاولوا الدنو من ذلك البيت ليتبينوا حقيقة الوضع وبينما هم على مقربة من المكان لمحوا الرجل راكضاً وفي يده حقيبة فركبوا دراجاتهم وحاولوا اللحاق به بعد أن أصبح جلياً لديهم أن هذا الرجل لا محالة لص وقد سطى على هذا البيت وسرق منه بعض الأشياء.

أحس الرجل أن أناساً تلاحقه فحاول ما أمكن الفرار وبالسريّة القصوى فما كان على الأطفال إلا أن يصرخوا مستنجدين بكبار الضيعة كي يحاولوا أن يمسكوا السارق وفعلاً هذا ما حصل وما هي إلا برهة من الزمن إلا وكان السارق ممسوكاً من قبل رجلين من رجال الضيعة وعندئذ سارع الأطفال كلهم باتجاه الرجال فرحين بأن تعيهم لم يذهب سدى وأن العدالة سوف تأخذ مجراها بعد أن تم القبض على السارق وهكذا ذهب كل طفل إلى بيته في نهاية الحادثة ولديه قصة ليرويها لأهله وليتحدث بأسهاب عما حصل معهم في ذلك اليوم.

### Text 8

كان الأولاد يلعبون على دراجاتهم في ساحة قريبة من الشارع الرئيسي في البلدة الصغيرة ولجأة شاهد أحدهم رجلاً غريباً فسرعان ما أخبر رفاقه بذلك. كان الرجل مثيراً للشك فكل شيء حوله يدعو للشك والريبة، إذ أن نظراته غريبة وكذلك مشيته. ولذلك راح الأولاد يرقبون الرجل الذي كان يحاول تسلق السور والدخول إلى أحد المنازل المطلة على الشارع. دخل الرجل البيت وبعد قليل خرج وببدة حقيبة ممتلئة بالأمته. هنا زاد شك الأولاد في أمر هذا الرجل وأخذوا يراقبونه بحذر ولكن الرجل حاول الاختباء عندما علم أن الأولاد يراقبونه، وعندئذ أدرك الأولاد أن الرجل لصاً سرق الحقيبة ويحاول الهرب ولذلك قاموا بالاتصال بالشرطة وبعد دقيقتين وصل اثنين من رجال الشرطة وألقوا القبض على اللص.

### Text 9

كان هناك مجموعة من الأطفال الصغار يلعبون في ساحة القرية بدراجاتهم، فلاحظ أحدهم بأن انسان غريب كان يحاول الدخول على احد بيوت القرية عندما رآه يقفز من فوق سور حديقة الدار. نادى الصبي اصدقاءه، فوقف الجميع يراقبونه من بعيد. دخل اللص البيت وبعد قليل خرج وهو يحمل حقيبة يدوية ورآه الأطفال وهو يحاول اخفائها بين الاعراش الواقعة امام البيت القروي. في ذلك الحين، اسرع احد الأطفال بدراجته ليخبر اهل القرية عن اللص. وعاد بعد قليل مع اثنان من رجال القرية، اللذان وصلا في الوقت المناسب وألقوا القبض على اللص وهو يحاول اخفاء الحقيبة بين الاعراش. ركض الأطفال تجاه اللص مسرورين بالقاء القبض عليه وشعروا بأنهم قد حققوا عملاً مفيداً تجاه اهل القرية. ثم عادوا الى اللعب بدراجاتهم والفرحة تملؤهم.

### Text 10

"من منكم يسابقتني على دراجته يا اصدقاء" صاح طبوش. اجاب بتطيرط نعم

بالتأكيد ياطبوش جميعنا مستعدون اليس كذلك؟! جميعنا انا وانت ونعنع وسوسو وبحبوح لدينا دراجات والطقس جميل واليوم العطلة الاسبوعية. سوف نتسابق الى رأس الهضبة وفي نفس الوقت نسأل عن بديع. هل سافرت اسرته الى بلدة جدته؟ اجابت سوسو لا اعلم. ربما ولكن اضعنا كثيراً من الوقت. وبدأ السباق الجميع فرحون بدراجاتهم. طبوش في المقدمة يصيح انا انا في المرتبة الاولى. اجابت سوسو بغضب: كيف تجرؤ على قول هذا. لقد بدأت السباق بدون اعلام سبق. على أية حال السباق لم ينته بعد. الهضبة ما زالت اماننا ومنزل بديع مازال بعيداً. وخلال دقائق كان الجميع بقرب الهضبة. قال بحبوح هذا منزل بديع ولكنني متأكد الان بانه سافر مع اسرته. فجأة التفتت سوسو وقالت باستغراب ولكن انظروا من هذا الرجل الذي يقفز من فوق السور؟ انا اعرف افراد اسرة بديع جميعاً. بالتأكيد انه غريب عن هذه المنطقة. قال نعنع: بالتأكيد يجب أن نفعل شيئاً. ولكن الرجل قوي ولا نستطيع ايقافه. هنا تدخلت سوسو وصاحت هيا بنا يذهب الى القرية ونعلم جارنا ابو صخر لياتي هو وابنه كلاهما قوي البنية. وانطلق الجميع الى منزل ابو صخر الذي اتي راکضاً مع ابنه وهنا اشار الجميع انظر انه يحمل حقيبة بيديه ويبدو انها ثقيلة. وهنا انقض ابو صخر وابنه وأمسكا بيدي الرجل الذي بدا متعوراً. صاح صخر انظر الى هذا انه جهاز موسيقي. لقد ذهبت مع والد بديع لشراؤه الاسبوع الفائت. انه هدية لبديع بمناسبة عيد ميلاده. وهذا يحاول سرقة. حسنا يا صديقي الغريب لا اعتقد انه لا يوجد لديك ما تقول. هيا بنا الى الشرطة. سوف تشرح لهم كل شيء. هنا انطلقت اصوات الاطفال بالصياح. نعم لقد كان يوماً جميلاً. عندما يعلم بديع بهذا بالتأكيد سوف نحصل على حلوى. والدة بديع ماهرة جداً في صنع الحلوى.

### Text 11

كان سامر وماهر وبعض الأصدقاء من المدرسة يتسابقون على الدراجات في يوم ربيعي جميل. حين وصل الجميع إلى قمة الهضبة شاهد سامر رجل غريب عن القرية يحوم حول بيت الحناوي. كان سكان البيت في عطلتهم السنوية وكان المنزل خالياً من السكان.

قال سامر: انظروا من هناك

اجاب ماهر: من؟

سامر: رجل غريب يحوم حول بيت الحناوي.

اجابت ربما: لا بد أنه أحد الأقارب جاء ليروي الحديقة في غيابهم.

لم تنه ربما جملتها حتى قفز الرجل الغريب من وراء السور الى الحديقة واختفى وراء الشجرة.

ماهر: لا اعتقد أنه لص يود سرقة البيت.. هيا يجب أن نراقبه انذهبوا انتم بدراجاتكم خلف المنزل بينما انتظر انا هنا وأراقب ماذا سيحدث..

دار الأولاد بدراجاتهم خلف المنزل وراقبوا الرجل الغريب عن بعد. بعد دقائق معدودة خرج الرجل من المنزل وبيده حقيبة يد صغيرة ومشى باتجاه

موقف السيارة ..  
 "انظروا" قال سامر "يبدو أنه يريد سرقة السيارة أيضا"  
 ربما: من المؤكد أنه لص. اسرعوا يجب أن نتصل بالشرطة قبل أن يهرب  
 بالأغراض ..  
 جاء شرطيان في الوقت المناسب وألقوا القبض على اللص بينما كان يحاول  
 الفرار. حاول اللص التملص من أيديهم ولكنهم كانوا أقوى منه.  
 عاد سامر ورفاقه إلى الهضبة مبتهجين ليحكوا إلى بقية الأولاد عما أجزوه  
 من عمل نبيل.

Appendix (8)

8.1. The three narratives

The following examples (38), (39), and (40) are taken from the data described on pages 159 - 161.

(38) There were five children agreed to go for a bicycle's race the next weekend. While they were very excited about the end Hishan shouted: look at that man, he seems he is going to jump over that wall.

With the childish curiosity every one had suddenly forgotten about the race and stopped watching the thief.

After few minutes the man got out the house with a handbag in his hand and running away with his crime, but they did not want he let it go. They run on their bicycles to the nearest grown up friends and told them about what they had seen.

After that every one hurried after the thief.

The strong men managed to catch the bad man who felt very afraid and dropped the bag to show an electrical set inside it. The children ran towards the caught thief happily and helped the men in controlling him. (text 5, see appendix (3))

(39) A group of children are going out for a ride on their bikes. From the top of the hill they spot a man hanging-around the house at the bottom of the hill. They do not recognize the man and they know that he doesn't live in the area. They think this is suspicious. They see the man break-into the house then jump-over the fence and run away. The man is carrying a large bag. The children chase after the man on their bikes. They are very fit and they are soon able to catch-up with the thief. They jump off their bikes and watch the man run towards a car. They run after him. Two of the boys catch-up with the man and grab him by the arms. (text f, see appendix (4))

(40) Xaraja al-?awlaadu (saamir, aHmad, Hikmat, Hasan wa rabaab) went-out the-children (Samer, Ahmad, Hakmet, Hasan and Rabab)

9alaa darraajaati-him li-tanazuhi wa as-sibaaqi fii hadaa  
on bicycles-their picnicking and racing in this

al- jawwi al-jamiili.

the-weather the-nice



(In this beautiful weather, the children (Samer, Ahmad, Hakmet, Hasan and Rabab) went for a cycling trip and race.)

wa fajʔaatan wa hum fawqa at-tallati al-XaDraaʔi  
and suddenly while they over the-hill the-green

al-mufrifati 9alaa al-minTaqahi, wajaduu rajulan ʔariiban  
the-looking-down on the-area, found man-a strange

bialqurbi min suuri ʔaHadi al-manaazili tabduu 9alii-hi  
near from fence one the-houses seeming on-him

malaamuHu aʔ-farri wa ar-raybati,  
features the-evil and suspicious

(Suddenly, as they arrived at the green hill that looks down  
the area, they saw a stranger walking by the fence of one of  
the houses. He looked evil and suspicious.)

fa-waqafa al-ʔawlaadu bi-hiduuʔin fawqa at-tallati,  
and-stopped the-children with-quiet over the-hill

yuraaqibuuna-hu min ba9iidin duuna ʔan yaʔ9ura bi-him,  
watching-him from distance without to feel with-them

(The children stopped quietly over the hill and watched him  
from a distance.)

wa-ʔidaa bi-ar-rajuli yaqfizu fawqa suuri Hadiiqati al-manzili,  
and-suddenly with-the-man stepped over fence garden the-house

(The stranger stepped over the garden's fence.)

wa-baynamaa hum waaqifiina fii ʔamaakini-him mundahiʔiina  
and-while they standing in places-their surprised

li-Harakati hadaa ar-rajuli, ʔaahaduuhu yarkiDu bi-Xiffatin wa  
to-movement this the-man, saw-him running quickly and  
sur9atin ʔila daaxili fannaʔi al-manzili.

speed to inside the-house

(Then, at the children's surprise, he ran quickly into the house.)

fa-waqafa al-?awlaadu mutasammiriina fii ?amaakini-him,  
and-stopped the-children nailed in places-their

(The children stayed where they were.)

wa-?idaa bi-ar-rajuli al-?ariibi yaXruju wa-bi-yadi-hi  
and-then with-the-man the-strange come-out and-with-hand-his

miHfaZatan malii?atan wa kabiiratan, wa yam?ii bi-kullii ?iqatin  
case-a full and big and walk with-all confidence

wa-amaanin biduuni Xawfin ?aw wajalin,  
and-safety without fear

(The stranger came out with a big case in his hand and confidently walked away.)

fa-rakaba al-?awlaadu darraajaati-him yuriiduuna ta9aquba xaTTa  
and-rided the-children bicycles-their wanting to-follow line

as-saariqi min ba9iidin,  
the-thief from distance-a

(The children followed him on their bicycles.)

wa-9indamaa ja9ara as-saariqu ?anna-hu muraaqabun, inHanaa  
and-when felt the-thief that-he being-watched bent

?ilaa al-?arDDi yaqTatifu ba9Da al-?a9jaabi mumawihan  
on the-ground picking some the-grass covering

sirqata-hu,  
theft-his

(When the thief realised that he was being watched, he bent over the ground pretending that he was picking some grass.)

wa-faj?atan rajulaanin qaawiyaani yaXrujaani la-hu wa  
and-suddenly men-two strong go-out to-him and

qad masakuu yaday-hi maani9ii-hi mina al-faraari ?aw  
have held hands-his preventing-him from the escape or

al-harabi  
the-fleeing

(Suddenly, two big men came out, and strongly stopped him from  
running away.) (text 5, see appendix (7))

Translation of (40) as a connected paragraph

In this beautiful weather, the children (Samer, Ahmad, Hakmet, Hasan and Rabab) went for a cycling trip and race. Suddenly, as they arrived at the green hill that looks down on the area, they saw a stranger walking by the fence of one of the houses. He looked evil and suspicious. The children stopped quietly and watched him from a distance. The stranger stepped over the garden's fence. Then, at the children's surprise, he ran quickly into the house. The children stayed where they were. The stranger came out with a big case and confidently walked away. The children followed him on their bicycles. When the thief realised that he was being watched, in order to confuse people, he bent over to the ground pretending that he was picking some grass. Suddenly, two big men came out, and strongly stopped him from running away.

8.2. The propositions.

Using the framework described on pages 161 - 164, logical forms of utterances (38), (39) and (40) can be transferred into propositions.

Transforming logical forms of example (38) into propositions, the following propositions can be listed:

- (38a) There were FIVE CHILDREN.
- (38b) They agreed to go for a cycling race next weekend.
- (38c) They were very exited about the end.
- (38d) HISHAN shouted.
- (38e) What was shouted is look at THAT MAN.
- (38f) What was shouted is that he is going to jump over that wall.
- (38g) They were curious.

- (38h) They forgot about the race.
- (38i) They stopped the race.
- (38j) They watched THE THIEF.
- (38k) He got out the house after few minutes.
- (38l) He had a handbag in his hand.
- (38m) He is running away with his crime.
- (38n) They did not want to let him go.
- (38o) They ran on their bicycles to the nearest GROWN UP FRIENDS.
- (38p) They told them about what they had seen.
- (38q) They hurried after him.
- (38r) THE STRONG MEN managed to catch him.

Transforming logical forms of example (39) into propositions, the following propositions can be listed:

- (39a) A GROUP OF CHILDREN are going out for a ride on their bikes.
- (39b) They spot A MAN from the top of the hill.
- (39c) He is hanging around the house at the bottom of the hill.
- (39d) They do not recognise him.
- (39e) They know that he does not live in the area.
- (39f) They think this is suspicious.
- (39g) They see him breaking into the house.
- (39h) They see him jumping over the fence.
- (39i) They see him running away.
- (39j) He is carrying a large bag.
- (39k) They chase after him on their bikes.
- (39l) They are very fit.
- (39m) They are soon able to catch-up with him.
- (39n) They jump off their bikes
- (39o) They watch him.
- (39p) He runs towards a car.
- (39q) They run after him.
- (39r) TWO OF THE BOYS catch-up with him.
- (39s) They grab him by the arms.

Transforming logical forms of example (40) into propositions, the following propositions can be listed:

- (40a) THE CHILDREN went for a cycling trip.
- (40b) They went for a cycling race.
- (40c) They arrived at the green hill.
- (40d) They saw A STRANGER.
- (40e) He was walking by the fence of one of the houses.
- (40f) He looked suspicious.
- (40g) He looked evil.
- (40h) They stopped.
- (40i) They watched him from a distance.
- (40j) He stepped over the garden's fence.
- (40k) They were surprised.
- (40l) He ran into the house.
- (40m) They stayed where they were.
- (40n) He came out.
- (40o) He had a big case.
- (40p) He walked away.
- (40q) He was confident.
- (40r) They followed him on their bicycles.
- (40s) He realised that he has been watched.
- (40t) He bent over the ground.
- (40u) He pretended that he was picking some grass.
- (40v) TWO BIG MEN came out.
- (40w) They stopped him from running away.

8.3. New and given entities in (38), (39) and (40)

Table (8.1.)

Table (8.1.) lists new entities and given entities in example (38).

| new entities    | sentence reference number for given entities |
|-----------------|--|
| 'five children' | they (38b)                                   |
|                 | themselves (38b)                             |
|                 | they (38c)                                   |
|                 | they (38g)                                   |
|                 | they (38h)                                   |
|                 | they (38i)                                   |
|                 | they (38j)                                   |
|                 | they (38n)                                   |
|                 | they (38o)                                   |
|                 | their (38o)                                  |
|                 | they (38p)                                   |

they (38p)

---

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| 'Hishan'           | -   |
| 'that man'         | he (38f)  |
| 'the thief'        | he (38k)<br>he (38l)<br>his (38l)<br>he (38m)<br>his (38m)<br>him (38n)<br>him (38q)<br>him (38r) |
| 'grown up friends' | them (38p)  |
| 'the strong men'   | -   |

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Besides, the above references to given entities, there is one reference, which is not mentioned in the above table. It is the following:

- they (38q) refers to both 'the children' and their 'grown up friends'.

Table (8,2,)

Table (8,2,) lists new entities and given entities in example (39).

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| entity                | sentence reference number   |
|-----------------------|---|
| 'a group of children' | their (39a)<br>they (39b)<br>they (39d)<br>they (39e)<br>they (39f)<br>they (39g)<br>they (39h)<br>they (39i)<br>they (39k)<br>their (39k)<br>they (39l)<br>they (39m)<br>they (39n)<br>their (39n)<br>they (39o)<br>they (39q) |
| 'a man'               | he (39c)<br>him (39d)<br>he (39e)<br>him (39g)<br>him (39h)<br>him (39i)<br>he (39j)<br>him (39k)   |

---

him (39m)  
 him (39o)  
 he (39p)  
 him (39q)  
 him (39r)  
 him (39s)

---

'two of the boys'            they (39s)

---

Table (8.3.)

Table (8.3.) lists new entities and given entities in example (40).

| entity         | sentence reference number |
|----------------|---------------------------|
| 'the children' | they (40b)                |
|                | they (40c)                |
|                | they (40d)                |
|                | they (40h)                |
|                | they (40i)                |
|                | they (40k)                |
|                | they (40m)                |
|                | they (40m)                |
|                | they (40r)                |
|                | their (40r)               |
| 'a stranger'   | he (40e)                  |
|                | he (40f)                  |
|                | he (40g)                  |
|                | him (40i)                 |
|                | he (40j)                  |
|                | he (40l)                  |
|                | he (40n)                  |
|                | he (40o)                  |
|                | he (40p)                  |
|                | he (40q)                  |
|                | him (40r)                 |
|                | he (40s)                  |
|                | he (40s)                  |
|                | he (40t)                  |
|                | he (40u)                  |
|                | he (40u)                  |
|                | he (40w)                  |
| 'two big men'  | they (40w)                |

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Appendix (9)

University of Damascus

Faculty of Letters

Third Year - Sociology

September 1984 Exam.

TEXT

A large body of evidence indicates that every civilization was primarily created by a series of acts of violence, or at least by aggressive and threatening acts through which the masses of peoples were deprived of their fruits of their labor. But today many of the products of civilization can be put to the service of the whole community. This prospect can only be realised when citizens, as well as governments, perceive acceptance of responsibility for each other.

QUESTIONS:

- 1- Translate the above text into Arabic. (50 marks)
- 2- From the text above and from your readings write four lines about: "Social revolution and violence" (30 marks)
- 3- Define the following in English:  
Trade - Nomad - underdevelopment - A motive - Custom (20 marks)



## Appendix (10)

### Text 1

Cohesion is a semantic relation. It is of two kind: Grammatical and lexical. Grammatical cohesion includes coreference, substitution, ellipsis, etc.; lexical cohesion includes reiteration and collocation. Moreover, reiteration is achieved by various ways; by superordinate by near-synonymy, by general class and by repetition.

### Text 2

She dwelt among the untrodden ways  
besides the springs of dove,  
A maid whom there were none to praise  
and very few To Love,  
A violet by a mossy stone  
Half hidden from the eye  
fair as a star when only one  
Is shining in the sky.

She Lived unknown and few could know  
when Lucy ceased to be,  
But she is in her grave and OH,  
the difference to me.

Commentry: This poem was actually written by the famous writer William Wordsworth who lost his beloved all of sudden and in this poem.

### Text 3

Joyce presented Dub as a storehouse of symbolism awaiting apprehension and interpretation. His aim was to present a moral lesson of the Irish life and Dublin. Symbolism in Dub were associated with realistic aspects of the social life. In a way or another Dub symbolism could be attributed to the relation between the individual and the social group. This was presented in a symbolic phase of ...

### Text 4

I always prefer if I have time to think of myself and ask what I want and why or for what purpose I need to do that thing and not that. My start point will be this very minute; what do I feel?

I feel helpless like a fly in a pan of molasses, there is no way to escape and the more I tear around the more liable I will be to rip my legs off. This is a comment on life or a glimpse on life which I came through when I was reading letter from a teacher -

#### Text 5

D.H. Lawrence is an outstanding twentieth-century writer. He was born in 1885 and died on the 3rd March 1930. He wrote a lot, and on various subjects. His bulk of work includes novels, shortstories, essays, travel books and drama. He was condemned for his early works, particularly The Rainbow, just because he spoke openly on subjects that nobody could escape commenting on. His Women In Love ...

#### Text 6

The main thing in the play "Hamlet" remains why does Hamlet hesitate. If he kills the new king when he has the first opportunity to do so he would have saved the lives of many people. Different explanations are discussed by critics. Some of these explanations are rejected immediately. To say, for example, ...

## Appendix (11)

### Student 1

Life is full of difficulties and the problems of human being is so much and curious, so we must face the reality logically and bravely and we must overcome our problems to be able to live safely, so one day I saw a film and the story of the film influenced me. The film was about a lady who married for love and this love turned into dust, because of that she hated her child who called Hohn, because he heard her father said that many brought the luck although she was a beautiful lady and she had a rich one so the idea took a position in his mind and he accidentally found a way of making money. He shared in a big race of horses and won the race by the assistance of his gardener who called George he had a habit to bet on horses, so the child got the money but the money did not bring the happiness of his mother so he isolated himself and thought deeply about mother's sadness. After that he shared in other race at the last season, before he knew that he is a winner, he died. Because he did not know the main reason of his mother's complaining, so what is the main reason of this tragedy. Is physical love? Because she did not get the love after marriage she was the devil of her son and because of his complaining and sadness she led her son to victim himself for her sake. And finally I summarize by that she was a selfish woman, so she must turn her love for her son to fill the gap which her husband made. In other hand she might be a strong and more realistic to earn the love of his child to feel him of her mother's warmth she must be a good experience for the other. But her bad behavior teaches us to have a will to make everyone happy before our happiness.

### Student 2

This film consists of three characters, The father, mother, and their son and the dog (Lora), This family lived in small town and The father is a fisherman and he likes his work very much also his son (Goerg).

They have a beautiful dog and she is a friend of Goerg, They loved each other very much,

Every morning Goerg and his father and Lora went to the sea to catch the fish and sell it in the shopping.

Lora is a white dog and harmless and she helps the family in some works, Lora lived with them in the house, and get her food with them, she is a very clean dog and very clever...

She loved the children and played with them, she was a good company to Goerg and

his father Because she went with Them and help Them.

On dayfather was very ill and he couldn't go to his work, so Goerg and lora went to catch a fish,

while he threw the stike he fallin The water and bigan to swimming and shouting a help me, please, help,..

lora bigan to go and back in same place, until she run quickly and brought a big trick of tree and she put it in The water aand sat on it intil rich to Goerg and saved him, and put him on The shore and run quickly to the street and bigan to waved to the cars, and put him in The car and tak him to The house.

After That Goerg a cured and became will, and thanks lora, and she seemed proud and happy.

In on night lora was slipping in The shelter with cows and slips, suddenly she heard a voice of foots and one person lights a condie and he began to pushed The ships to out to his friend, lora understand that they are a thief. She sielently fiel The candle on the floor and run to tell That to family, But the thief shouted her, she make her self died, and she walks quitly in darkness, and her body full of blood. The father opened The door and alluded with her head to The shelter and The father and nighers catch The thieves. But in the end The cleaver dog died.

### Student 3

TV can't be harmful to children if there is a good programmes especially the programe, which is so esseanial to children to see it and voutied, and hass the benfit on their mind, and their ability indistinguish him the facts and different aspects.

But it can be harmful in somtimes incase their is somthing don't suitable to their age as a children, especially along programme, and ahorrer, which bring to them the alear, and anxiety this case effects on their mind. The disadvantages of TV, in contrast with advantages as I mentioned befor we see that it can be usful and amusement, when their parentes' knoue exactly how could their children to watch the TV in correct times. In this case the amusement programe will prevent them in doing somthing wrong, and disturbing each others, or their parents.

so that the children can have the amusement, and the benfit through their wathing and effects on their minds strongly, when th specialists persons know how to show the children the programme, and also in what time, and, when I say in what time, I mean, what times are sutabil, and most conveient to see it, not inalate time.

Finally, I from my point of view,, think that TV can be harmful to children in

case there is not general films which is relate to their carness & attract their attention But it can be usefull in case their is somthing make them mor mutual, and here have agood effection in their mind as achildren.

#### Student 4

Nowadays T.V. is avelable in evry family, and evry hous, T.V become as an inportant need for this life, T.V enjoyed us enjoyed our Time all The day with The funny programs and films and make us very excituig with it.

T.V. is useless and usefull at The same Time, it has advantages and disabvantages Towards people and espaicaly Toward children, There are usefull films which can lewartn and our-children good Things, and by The education films we can learn a new things about The world and life, There are e many films which The children embarrassed by it and imitat The good habit and behaivours Towards sociaty.

Although T.V has a positive siad, Although has nigtive one Towards childfren, There are many meaningless films which has a bad influanc for children, and became a dangerous films for e sociaty.

This meaningless films can be harmful To children, because They imitate the bad habit and The bad behaveour, T.V, by This well lead Them To make The criam and To became crimenaly children.

T.V with This Things became a useless Thing and will distroyed all The treditions of the good sociaty and children will grow up by The bad things, They will leve their stuady and Their exams and setting only for T.V and its programs T.V must Teach The Children How To built Their sociaty and To complet The progress of bulding a new world hand by hand with each other, So we see T.V can be harmful To children by The bad films and useless and meaningless programes but we must choosing The useful said of T.V and not The useless one.

#### Student 5

The answer about T.V, is very important in our life, now we can saw the T.v in all house, and offiuce, car's, etc. in our society, this case is very ordinary, because we live in industry word, and we must walk in procrase way, The more important answer, Did The T,v good, or wrong, useful, or harmful to children? I think we can saw, some program very good, useful at children, and the otehr is worst For children must saw "the cardbord Film" they can get some knowlege, who can tread with the other children and learn how feeble can knock down the stronger [ex: tom and Jerry] and we have in T,v some Films talk about some bad hapite disappear in new society, we don't

forget the film talk about; "a animal words", "sea words" can get some information used in him future. They can saw the Education lessons help to succed For him school. In the other hand T.v expoid some times a harmful and bad filas to children can born the horroble, and terror, and learn them some bad hapit about attack and friteen. In this case the children loss his confidence and become very auxiouy, and other film expoid, love marrige, hot sympathy, of ten the children understood this meaning in wrong way, and became his behaver like animal's.

I thinkif mother's can saw the program and choose abest and useful film and yet red other in confin way. In this case the motehr's effect her duty to children.

we must keep our children at T.v in school days and learn them who study and effect his impision in future, only can saw T.v in west time.

#### Student 6

It was a sorrowfull accident, when a little boy thrown himself from the roof of his home like a supperman, a little broken body on the streat, without any movement, it was resolt of the TV cartoon film.

It is a harmful thing, to controled our childrens mind, because their mind is too little to understand, what is shown in teh TV, their imagenatiuon will make them do anything Although it will be adengeruse thing, like this bay, who thrown himself, he things that he can fly like superman, we have seen many accident like this one.

TV is avery important instruemnt, because it has many effiction, abad effection and agood one, but if we use it in the correct way, then it will be useful we can educated our children by introdusing a useful programs, like learning them abeautiful things, to make them study, and work hard to be a succesfull boys.

TV has another bad effection, because if the children wants to see a cartoon film, they will stay infront ofit without movaing, like astatues, forgetting anything about their duety and their parants.

At last, Tv is not bad, but the bad program make us sometimes hate this instruemnts, and prevent our children to see its programs, because it is harmful.

#### Student 7

Last week my daughter Sally, whose old is four years, invited to a children's party. I decided to took her by train. Sally was very exciting, because she had never travelled in a train befor. She sat near The window, and asked questions about everything she seen. Suddenly "midde-aged lady came into our compartment, and sat oposit Sally, "Hallo little girl" she said. Sally did not answered, but looked to her

curiously. The lady dressed in a blue coat, and a large funny hat. After The train had left The station, The lady opened her handbag, and took out her powder compact; she then, began to make up her face. "Why are you doing that?" Sally asked. "to make myself beautiful", The lady answered. She put away her compact, and smiled kindly. "But you are still ugly", Sally said. Sally was amused, but I was very embarrassed.

I Deciding That to can be harmful to children is not easy because Tv has many advantages, and in now days, we cannot live without it, and all people young or old consider That Tv is a very important thing for every house.

All children consider tv a very important and necessarily Thing and all of Them like it, especially when The cartoon's film appeared in it, Then all The eyes gazed, and try to catch everything from it, and try to imitate what They saw, from this point we must note our children, because the children are influenced from everything they saw, and They try to make what they saw, and this thing may be caused dangers, because some programs are imaginative and Their heroes are not true, Then The children like to imitate this heroes from this They caused harm and damage.

Tv can be harmful to children if we don't choose a good and right film for Them, and we must be careful and attention about what our children saw.

tv has advantages and in same time disadvantages. It is amusing and can teach The children if The programs are good Don't we must care and attention.

#### Student 8

Love in a great meaning in this life. Love is a relationship between man and woman, love is a beautiful word lives in our hearts. Last year I saw a beautiful film, and I still remember it until now, the film discussed the meaning of love.

she was a beautiful woman, lived with her family in a beautiful house, and every person in her family loved her. She called Raina, she loved a man who worked teachers' school. But she couldn't offer love to him, he came her every day and stood many hours. But she didn't tell him any word about love, she didn't define her feeling towards him, the year was passed and one day a man visited them in the house he called John, he admired with her beautiful, and she admired with him, and after many time she began to forget the first man who loved her very much, the man who offered her love, helping, admiration, she forgot him as nothing in her life, and married with John and left her love because John had a money to live happy. But she failed in her marriage life, and began to suffer from her husband, she tried to return the relationship between her and her first love, But the man refused that thing, and asked her to live with her husband and offered him love to achieve her happy life.

But she couldn't live with her husband so she killed herself.

in the last I find that the story was very beautiful because it offered to be the meaning of love, and we must to put one purpose before our eyes, and forget every thing. we must not to forget our hope for money, because money will finish. And the love will still at the end.

#### Student 9

Yes, I think that T.v can be harmful to children, but not all times. Sometimes is useful to them, when it transmits a good program

Sometimes, T.v be harmful to children, but when it transmits a good program, as in an open your doors. This program is very useful for children. Through this program they can know reading, writing, and how they can count numbers from one to hundred. Sometimes, there are many disadvantages for children, when they saw T.v such a bad films because these films will disorder their mind, and it makes them to avoid their duty and their studying. The mother of children must avoid their sons, and girls to see as these films, and he must device them, that these films are very absolute terror, and very ugly.

#### Student 10

If I ask this question: is Tv harmful to children? from this point I shall write about this subject, because life is full of many harmful things and useful things, and all of these things impress in our life, especially the children, because they have no knowledge no experience yet in this life, they are still little, they don't know anything about this life, so they will learn from many things from us, especially from TV, because the majority of them or all of them fond of Tv and like to see the program in Tv, and this matter influence on them, on the other hand the programs of Tv are various, and as we know Tv contain many things: program for children and for young...etc. so when child see everything in TV, that means that child harm himself, because he will learn things not to him, he will learn things he don't know about it before, not only this; but he will be let his homework and become a lazy child, and tired and sick, and this is influence on the society, so children must see only children's program, whether the Tv will be harmful to him. But when child don't see everything in Tv except the children's film in this case Tv will not be harmful to child. But sometimes Tv exposed bad cartoon for children, so it impresses on the behaviour of children, this films which Tv exposed to children influence on them, so it must be good and useful like the children's films in our tv.



so as it appeared to us that tv sometimes harmful when it exposed and pretend a bad films espically children's filmes, but when children see everything in tv that means the children by themselves harm themselves, and the mistake became from them end harmful from them not from tv.

so I consider that tv is not harmful all the time, we must be careful of the children to not let them saw every thing in tv only children's program.

Student 11

Many people thinking that T.V is wasting the time of the children, but this idea is wrong, because there is more programmes and shows in the T.V are help the children to have an information, and to have a good ideas.

In my opinion that T.V can be harmless to children, because in T.V that the harmful programmes and the harmless programmes, if I want to have a good children I must learn my children to see an educational programmes, and an interesting programmes, Although that there is violent films and silly films in T.V, but I can learning my children in the first life to how he can choose the programmes in T.V. Because in the first period of the children, the parents can built the character of their children, because the child very effectes to the atmosphere around him.

In the finally years, the video was disappeared, and the parents can helps their children to using a good cassette in the video and the parents start bring a harmless programmes, and to start how their children can choose the programmes.

And at the end, T.V is not harmful to children, but this is depended on the parents and how they can bring the information for them.

Student 12

Tv. is an instrument for enjoying, and there must be certain times to watch it. It offers several programmes which can be useful as: Training programmes, educational programmes, and scientific programmes...etc., and can be harmful as war's programmes and cowboy programmes.

Children must not sit and watch all of the programmes in Tv, but certain programmes of it, because sometimes the Tv. becomes very harmful to them through its programmes, so when the child sees the hero of a certain film doing strange thing and making the wonders by his strength, he will do like him and imagine his self a strong hero and do exactly what the film's hero was doing, so his behaviour becomes very bad. So the programmes like this one as "Grandizer" teach children the strength and unkindness and make their behaviour very bad. There are some programmes which attract their attention make them go away their study, and there are some programmes teach them bad qualities as smoking and drinking, and teach them that these qualities make the man.

So we can see many children leave their schools thinking that what they are doing is right and they will be better without study and depend on themselves by

working, because, almost, of thier watching Tv.

As we have seen that Tv, has a great effect at on the children's minds and can be very harmful to them through it's programmes. So we have to take care with them and with thier behaviour and don't allow them to sit and watch all of the programmes of the Tv, except the useful programmes, because children are the most beautiful in our life.

### Student 13

Last night I saw a wonderful film. The story of that film was about a child who was living with her father and his wife, who used to consider her as her mother.

Im the first year of the marrieg between her father and his new wife, they were happy, and she was happy too. But after that wife became bregnant, she became to treat her as if she was a servent in the house, she was always asking her to do a lot of work in the house, cleaning, cooking, and shopping, but before her father came back to the house she was always asking her to talk a bath and to sit besid him and not to do any work, she was thriting her that if she toled him about that she would had punched, and throughn out.

One day, a young man saw her in the garden, and he found of her and he used daily to come to that garden to see her, after two days she saw him, and she talked to him and they fill in love. The man toled her that he had a farm and a big and beautiful house, and a geat annount of money.

After a month he came to her father to aske him to agree and to pless his marrieg from his daughter, but he refused, because, she was a yong girl. but the real reason was that he wanted to keep her to serve his wife after she borned a beautiful boy. After a year the father died, but he died after he left everything to his wife and his son, so the father's wife asked the girl to leave the house and go away from it.

she did what she had been asked, and she went to her lover and toled him everthing, so he asked her again to marrieg him and she agreed.

After about two years she heard that there was an accident near the house between two cars, and in one of that cars there was a woman and her chiled The chiled died, and his mother was in the hosbital, she desided to help her by a great annount of money, and when she went to the hosbital she found that that woman was her father's wife, she forgot everthing about her life with her and rushed to help her but she refused, so she left her with sadness appon her face and in her hart.

After the woman went out of the hosbital she found herself a poor woman, and she

had to work in order to eat a good food, but she did not know any thing except how to clean and cook so she decided to work for ladies and she worked in the house of a young lady who was the daughter of her husband till she died, so that was the story of that film.

#### Student 14

Last week I saw an enjoyable film. It was about a woman and man who became doctors, and got married. The wife was an English, but the husband an Indian. Her husband wanted to return to her country, but his wife refused to go with him, so he thought to divorce her and he did.

In India, a dangerous disease prevailed, which was 'cancer'. The doctor worked and worked to cure his people of it, because he loved his country very much.

One of his patients was old and had a girl. The old man was aware of his illness, and that he would die shortly. So he implored the doctor to have his daughter as a wife after his death, because she had no brother or relative. The old man died of 'cancer' and the doctor married the daughter.

The daughter served him faithfully. Days passed and she got pregnant. She had a girl, but, alas, the mother died! So he took care of her till she became a young girl.

But what was sorrowful was that she fell in illness of 'cancer'. He did the best to cure her of that disease, but in vain. So he decided to go to England, when they had been there, they went to a famous hospital, the operation was done; and the young girl was cured of that disease.

The most surprising thing was that the doctor who did the operation was his previous wife. The husband knew the fact and thanked her very much. In the same matter, his wife married and had a boy, but her husband died for seven years ago.

Finally, the members of the family got closely to each other after the widow and widower got married again.

#### Student 15

Watching TV, is a very interesting thing for children. So the child enjoys any programme showed on the TV, and he does not get tired of it.

In some cases, TV can be harmful to children when they misunderstand some programmes.

I myself saw a child who stands in a high place shouting Grandayzar and jumps so his leg was broken.

Sometimes, children watch films or programmes which is over their level, and they can't understand it, so this is harmful to children. Here, the parental responsibility comes, so the parents must look after their children and those good programmes for them, and prevent them from watching what they think it is harmful.

But that does not mean that TV is harmful at all because children get a lot of TV by learning good habits and good things.

#### Student 16

Once upon a time and in the evening, I decided to watch the TV. So I turned on the TV, and the film was, in that evening, about a family, consists of six persons.

That family contains, father, who has a company, and mother, who has not any work, and four children. Father is serious to educate his children till they get the good positions in society. So after years and years, father achieves his dream, which is the good children in the society. The first child who is a doctor, the second child who is an engineer, the third one who is lawyer, and the last one who is university teacher. Each one has taken his position in society and begins to work. Year by year, father has become old, and diseases begin to attack him, so he must stay in his home and do not work. Then the child who is engineer takes his position in the company, because father has become sick and weak. Thus, after few years, father has died. And from here the problem begins, because, after 2 years, each one wants to detain his plans and aims.

But at the end of the film we notice that good family has become without virtue and without habits which their father learn.

#### Student 17

Last year I saw a beautiful film, its story was very interesting. It was about a beautiful lady whose name was Anai. Anai was married, but her husband was very ill. So she had to work very hard to bring the good to her family. She had three children; two boys and one girl. This family was a very poor family as all families in that country they were working in their lands and fields, but they didn't take any money because the ruler of their country was very hard and miser. He loved Anai and wanted to marry her, but she didn't do, so he killed her husband and stole her big child and hid him. Anai was a great woman; so she worked and worked to make her children great persons. She had a great hope that her child will return back again, so she fought against the ruler and people for 13 years. Her son became a great man, he became a doctor, and her daughter became teacher. Now her big son return back and

killed The ruler to revange his father. In the end Aaal became free and pleant, but her big son went to preson.

#### Student 18

Every age has its own way in educating and amusing people, either the children or the younger. In the past, theater was the most important thing, and it is still a successful way for people who like the Artist, but now, T.v. take its place hastily for many reasons, one of them its larg sepread, it exists in every house, so, we couldn't resist its programs which transmit it.

Now, children are the largest part who can see the t.v. programs continually, So, sometimes we find them behave in the same way which they had seen befor which may be hurted them, also by their seing to the younger's programs, imitate acertain habits which can influnces in their characters.

So, we couldn't say that t.v is harmful or successful, because these return to the responsibility of people.

yet, we have tow resposibility here. First, the parents' responsibility, and It is very important, because they always can watch their children, and They can definit The suitable programas to their ages, and the suitable time For their sleeping. Seconde, the people who are responsible of the T.v programas,

so, t.v. can be harmful if we didn't care with our children, and what they watch, and to avoide the harm and the problems which t.v. may causes it, we should be more wisdom and more careful in order to keep our children Far from dangerous and harm.

#### Student 19

T.V is like asword with two edges, because this complecated apparatus can be useful and good and in the same time avery harmful and bad. The main question now is: this apparatus useful or not?

In my opinion it is useful if we used it in the right and suitable way and useless if we miss used it. According to the new studies and the results wich they reach to that: it can be harmful and it can be useful. I agree with them I think that TV give the children anew and beautiful word. TV in many ways give them information, and give them achance to learn something new. I think that in somehow T.V increases their knowledge andalso makes them think and teach them to use their mind instead of not using them.

It can also be harmful. This is a fact, and accept it, but how? We know that children are fond of Kartoons. So we must give our children a certain times for

watching TV, and allow them to have a good time. In the same time we ought to give them some advices about how to regulate their time between T.V and school duties. If we did not do these things we are making a very bad mistake and the result is they will spend the most of their time watching the T.V and they became fond of T.V instead of their school. In this way the television is the worst thing which causes our children fail in everything. Their homework would be neglected. They will face failure in their school, their life. Then who is responsible about that, of course we are!

We come to this conclusion that: we must use Television in a good way and carefully or we will face difficult problems with our children may be not now but in the future.

#### Student 20

I am a lucky man. In the last year I saw a film talking about a person who was very poor. He lived in a very cheap place and this place was very dirty. He was very common man and his income was not enough to depend on in that complex and expensive life. He thought that if he worked hard he would have had. One night, he was walking in a street and suddenly he saw an ugly man with his knife waiting someone in order to hurt or kill him. The man came from his building which he lives in. In that moment the ugly man rushed towards him, but the poor man was strong enough to prevent him from doing his murder.

The murderer, therefore, ran away and the rich man appreciated the courage of the poor man and thanked him. The rich man admired that poor man and wanted him to be a friend to him. He said if you don't mind come to my office and I will find a good job for you. Of course it was a good offer for the poor man. He can now earn money and the admiration of the rich man would be very useful. He accepted that offer and went to meet the rich man.

He worked in the rich man's company. He was good in his work and a hard worker man. The admiration of the rich man was developing at day by day towards the hard poor man. He decided to marry his lovely daughter from the honest and hard worker poor man. The poor man married the daughter and his dream came true. In the end of film, the last word was said by the poor man I am a lucky man.

## Appendix (13)

Appendix (13) states British teachers' comments on essays 1 - 10. For reasons of focus, teachers' comments on issues related to the content and the communicative functions of one's writing are italicised. This would help me in working out the difference in the nature of comments provided by Syrian and British markers.

### Marker 1

Essay no.1: *The essay is unstructured. This is partly the fault of the essay question - the student is asked to run before s/he can walk. If given guidelines, or if the task were in stages, the marker might not have such a horrid job.*

*The generalising statement at the beginning is irrelevant. I wasn't sure which essay was written until the 2nd sentence. The reference of pronouns is not clear. There is no signalling of stages of the essay.*

Essay no.2: *This seemed more coherent than the 1st one, but again little signalling or organizing material into paragraphs. There seemed to be no generalizing statements, just a chronology - no attempts to introduce or conclude the essay.*

Essay no.3: *This essay showed a semblance of organization - paragraphs etc, but I couldn't work out what each paragraph was saying. It starts with a strong introduction which says TV can't be harmful and ends with a strong conclusion that TV can be harmful. I'm confused.*

Essay no.4: *Much better organization - but maybe it's a problem of this type of essay which is difficult to handle, and rarely written apart from composition classes. The student has problems bridging the form against arguments, but then that's really a problem of the essay type rather than the students' fault. Once the organization of the essay is clearer, it's easier to focus on the grammatical/spelling mistakes.*

Essay no.5: *The essay has some organization, but it's not very evident. There is paragraphing but it's not clear. The conclusion is new material, but at least the introduction is an introduction. Grammatical errors seemed to intrude here.*

Essay no.6: *The essay has no introduction but alternates between paragraphs for and against - the conclusion might be an attempt to resolve this, but it's not signalled before. The opening sentence might have worked as an*



*introduction (I got thrown by 'supperman') if it had served as a statement of an argument.*

Essay no.7: *The essay started promisingly enough, but the introduction didn't stop until 6 lined from the end of the essay. The counter argument is limited to 2 lines.*

Essay no.8: *Irrelevant opening sentence. No title of the film. In some ways this essay title doesn't offer itself for efficient organization - it's a 1 paragraph essay. I got very confused towards the end as to who was who, at least it had a firm conclusion - unasked for by the essay question.*

Essay no.9: *Not much to this essay when compared to the others. Very inefficient signalling - in paragraph 2 s/he states TV harmful, but the rest of the paragraph is about the usefulness of TV. No conclusion.*

Essay no.10: *A bit more clear signalling and organization would have meant a better essay. The introduction goes on too long. Almost a conclusion. No paragraphs. The argument proved a bit better - there were fewer grammatical errors.*

#### Marker 2

Essay no.1: *Spelling and grammar are very weak. There are punctuation and register errors (e.g.: "lady") but these are less intrusive. The logic of the argument is not brought out - the connection between the moral generalisation at beginning and in conclusion and the illustration of the film is not clear. This is in part due to lack of cohesive structures and in part incoherent content.*

Essay no.2: *Again grammar and spelling very weak. Punctuation also very weak, but this does not interfere with comprehension. However, what really makes the essay incomprehensible is the handling of the content - of logical structure or explanation - and the lack of internal cohesion; of causal sequencing and explanation of chronology and significance of reported events. A really obvious example of the confusion created is the second sentence: "This film consists of 3 characters ... father, mother son and there dog" The swapping from one tense to another makes it very difficult to follow the narrated action. There are lots of examples of this - so perhaps the weak grammar should be ranked higher. Absence of cohesion; "while he threw the stick he fall in the water" where the referent is difficult to locate, and also makes the essay very difficult*

*to read.*

Essay no.3: *Content is vacuuous; argument is poorly developed - no argument. Spelling is very poor, as is grammar. Punctuation and register are areas where there are errors - the use of contracted forms is a register mistake. Internal cohesion is hard to follow - there so much lack of concord in plural and singular verbs and objects.*

Essay no.4: *Argument repetitive and relies on assertion not substantiated discussion, poor spelling, poor grammar can't form subordinate clauses consistently. Lexis lacks specificity "Good things/bad things" doesn't make intention of writer clear. Punctuation poor capital letters used arbitrarily.*

*I imagine that if there really were any substance to the argument any substantive evidence, any examples or specificity, any development of ideas, then this structure would make the essay mostly comprehensible, despite other errors. Because the essay is nebulous and repetitive at this level, it becomes harder to deduce what is intended by the writer.*

*The errors in punctuation - scattered capitalisation - don't interfere with understanding, and nor do spelling errors particularly.*

*Lack of internal cohesion is a major problem - in the last sentence there are several mistakes of this.*

Essay no.5: *Again, the primary fault to an incoherent argument and structure-repetition, lack of specificity. There are multiple problems with grammar- tenses, concord, use of nouns "Feeble/stranger". Spelling mistakes produce confusion -"words" for "worlds", "procrase for progress. There are lexical errors, where the wrong word has been selected, and these. So a lack of internal cohesion- but this is often quite hard to distinguish because confusion arises at so many levels in any single sentence- but, for example, "...some program very good, useful at children, and the other is worst" - this seems to be primarily a problem of cohesion.*

Essay no.6: *As with previous essays, the content is insubstantial and repetitive. Cohesion is a severe problem, in the opening sentence, for example -"it was a sorrowfull accident". The grammatical errors are many and various- lack of concord, tense changes and clause structure, spelling causes confusion e.g. "supperman" for "superman", and punctuation is wrongly*

used. Lexical errors e.g.: effecton- this is neither a spelling, nor a grammatical mistake; also "at last" for "finally" or "in conclusion".

Essay no.7: In the first paragraph, *cohesion seems to be the main problem; clause structure gets out of hand*. Tenses and concord are often wrong. Spelling is haphazard. Lexical inaccuracies e.g. 'heros are not 'tru' are major obstacles to easy comprehensibility. Lots of punctuation errors, but *these don't inhibit ease of reading*

Essay no.8: *The clause/sentence is very confused. Sentences start with connectives 'then, and because, but'- subordinate clauses stands on their own in some instances, and in others, clauses are strong together regardless of structure or content- cohesion- linking names + pronouns - is a problem- the distinction between the 2 male character is often not clear.* Punctuation is often wrong- this overlaps with grammar, though, and *doesn't interfere with meaning*, except where it coincides with a very great grammatical error.

Essay no.9: very short, but actually *the first are with a concrete argument for why T.V. can be beneficial (though not for the reverse)*; grammar slightly better, perhaps because less ambitious than previous essays. Still problems with concord, lexis ('know' for 'knows'), tense ('saw' for 'watch'), spelling haphazard ('their' and thier'), punctuation- errors less dense than others, however.

Essay no.10: *Slightly better structured argument, a bit more in control of subject matter.* Problems with verb endings agreeing with subject, tenses change, lexical errors frequently. *Cohesion (child/children and conjunctions most evident examples) is also a problem.* Appearance of *lack of logic*, perhaps due to lack of confidence and range of lexis and a grammatical structures at writer's disposal.

### Marker 3

Essay no.1: *Virtually incomprehensible*  
very poor handwriting

Essay no.2: *story very difficult to follow*

Essay no.3: *Ideas inadequetely developed*, problems with sentence structure and vocabulary

Essay no.4: *Poorly developed and repetitious*, problems with sentence structure and vocabulary. Frequent spelling mistakes

- Essay no.5: *poorly developed, poor grammar and vocabulary*
- Essay no.6: *Inadequately developed, poor grammar and vocabulary. Structure promising, but conclusion unsatisfactory*
- Essay no.7: *Ideas difficult to follow and not developed properly. Problems with grammar and vocabulary*
- Essay no.8: *Incomprehensible in parts, problems: sentence structure, grammar, vocabulary*
- Essay no.9: *very poorly developed*
- Essay no.10: *Rather confused and difficult to follow; no clear structure*

#### Marker 4

- Essay no.1: Over-use of the definite article and misapplication to instances where pronouns were appropriate; confused syntax and unsatisfactory grasp of grammatical rules; Persistent and irritating spelling errors; mistakes in lexical choice.  
Training and practice in these areas, plus *emphasis on dividing essays into paragraphs would be most beneficial to this student.*
- Essay no.2: Poor use of punctuation-i.e. inability to distinguish between need for full stops and commas; use of capital (T) where it is not needed- i.e. student needs help in recognising instances where capitals are required; inability to distinguish between past and present tense- tuition required (i.e. especially in over-use of infinitive); spelling mistakes; *practice in dividing prose using paragraphs properly- when the subject changes.*
- Essay no.3: Failure to grasp use of singular and plural forms of verb 'to be'; sentences often formless i.e. rambling and without object; problems with word choice and word order (I would guess that in many cases, French or Arabic syntax is being imposed on English words, hence leading to mixed up sentences); student needs help with choosing appropriate conjunctions, prepositions, etc.
- Essay no.4: *Lack of coherence in sentences; i.e. no structure or development to argument in some cases; poor spelling; bad grammar (recurrent use of capital 'T' when not required); Syntax and over-repetitiveness are also in need of attention; basic elements of construction of sentences, paragraphs, proper use of conjunctions, prepositions, etc need reinforcing*

- Essay no.5: Poor grammar - needs strengthening of basics of tense, use of capital, use of prepositions, possessive pronouns, etc; serious problems with syntax i.e. jumbled word order combined with grammatical errors (i.e. wrong past of verb, singular for plural) to produce incoherent sentences, *little sense of how to develop and sustain an argument*, bad spelling mistakes.
- Essay no.6: Wrong tenses used; arrangement of clauses of sentence in wrong order; use of singular when of indefinite article; spelling mistakes; *student needs training in constructing sentence into paragraphs to form a coherent argument though proper use of conjunctions.*
- Essay no.7: Problems with use of tense e.g. past for present; again, use of prepositions requires attention by teachers; *lack of cohesion in argument*, bad spelling mistakes (i.e. of basic words); grammatical mistakes i.e. choice of wrong part of speech e.g. a verb instead of a noun; *too much repetition of same or similar points rather than developing and sustaining an argument*
- Essay no.8: Serious misuse of capital letters (i.e. used in wrong places, e.g. in middle of sentences); student needs tuition in proper use of conjunctions and prepositions; problems with mixed up syntax, improper use of verbs or their absences entirely from sentence; Also weak punctuation i.e. punctuation in wrong place, etc.
- Essay no.9: Absence of capital letter in first sentence; *Lack of coherence in some sentences* (e.g. wrong tenses lexical choice, syntax, grammar); student needs practice in use of singular/plural; tenses of verb; spelling mistakes.
- Essay no.10: A lack of punctuation (*student seems to have an idea of constructing essay using paragraphs, or of the proper use of sentences to communicate one or at most two ideas only*); *too much repetition of phrases instead of development of logical argument; lack of coherence in argument*, syntax mistakes and various grammatical errors too numerous to mention; student is in need of serious remedial help; *Argument often breaks down, as student does not even seem to know what they mean.*

Marker 5

- Essay no.1: *The essay begins fairly clearly but starts to breakdown, in terms of*

*coherence, by line 8, then it becomes difficult to understand.*

Essay no.2: *This essay makes sense, if read a couple of times. The difficulties, in the main, are with spelling and grammar*

Essay no.3: *This writer understands the basis of argumentation and attempts to present both cases. However, this is marred by a very basic approach and grammatical and spelling errors.*

Essay no.4: *This essay is better than the previous one, in that it presents a better argument - although it never gets beyond statements to discuss the issues more fully.*

Essay no.5: *The grammar and register in this essay are poor, and although some understanding of how to present an argument is present, it is handled in a very basic way probably because the writer lacks vocabulary.*

Essay no.6: *Does not seem to have grasped the way to construct an argument fully. The level of argument is poor, based on moral rather than logical concepts. Vocabulary is also shaky.*

Essay no.7: *Although I can understand this essay, and also that it does attempt to argue a case, the failings in grammar and vocabulary prevent the student from developing their ideas.*

It seems to me, by now that these students are being given exercises which are too difficult for them, because their grasp of vocabulary and grammar is not up to discussing a film or presenting an argument. It would appear that they need to be tested on much simpler exercises first and be given much more practice.

Essay no.8: *Apart from the grammatical errors, which make this difficult to read, the student presents a very sentimental view of this film - which may itself encourage this kind of response. The result is then clichéd and 'plabby'.*

Essay no.9: *This is difficult to read and understand. It also fails to present an argument clearly, and is the kind of essay I'd expect to see from a primary school child. Regarding the presentation of this and previous essays, I think that the student need exercises and advice on this aspect. In this particular essay, the student does not write in straight lines and it looks bad, like the writing of primary 2 school children.*

Essay no.10: *This essay presents a better argument and the level of discussion is more sophisticated than any of the*

*others*. There is still the problem with grammar verbs often omitted, and vocabulary but this *manages to transmit a more considered case*.

I have noticed that this student uses the same vocabulary as previous writers. This makes me wonder if these terms, like (harmful and useful), are being given to the students before they write. This may be part of the problem since these are very basic concepts to use in this kind of discussion.

#### Marker 6

- Essay no.1: *Weak overall structure, no paragraphing. Mistakes of tense and word class.*
- Essay no.2: *Problems of vocabulary, spelling and idioms. No conclusion, starts well, but tenses become confused.*
- Essay no.3: *Problems with word class, vocabulary and idioms. Good paragraphing and attempt to use markers (e.g. "Finally") and connectives (e.g. "in contrast")*
- Essay no.4: *Problems with word class, general grammar and sentence construction, needs paragraphing.*
- Essay no.5: *Problems with tense, word class, sentence construction, spelling, vocabulary.*
- Essay no.6: *Problems with tenses, word class, spelling. Too short. Good paragraphing, good attempt at structuring.*
- Essay no.7: *Problems with tenses and word class, sentences over-long and repetitive.*
- Essay no.8: *Weak overall structure. Problems with register and idioms. Good use of tenses- (i.e. uses the past tense consistently when telling the story of the film).*
- Essay no.9: *Problems with sentence construction, overall structure and grammar. Also too short.*
- Essay no.10: *Problems with verbs and articles. Over-long sentences. Repetitive. Would be quite good if sentences were shorter.*

#### Marker 7

- Marker 7 did not comment at all on any of the essays.

Marker 8

- Essay no.1: *The basic competence in English is so low that the piece is only just comprehensible- helped by the fact that the outline of the story is just recognizable.*
- Essay no.2: Again, the basic competence is so low ("slips" for "sleep") that questions of register and *cohesion do not arise.*
- Essay no.3: No grasp of simple idioms- "in a late time", "have a good effecton in their mind".
- Essay no.4: no comments
- Essay no.5: Handwriting is more legible- though at the cost of not being joined up. *But often incomprehensible.*
- Essay no.6: *An attempt at structuring, by starting with an example.* But the language is still poor.
- Essay no.7: "all eyes gazed"- not quite right, but at least ambitious.
- Essay no.8: Not made clear why the woman rejects the first man.
- Essay no.9: Short
- Essay no.10: *Fluent, though not accurate. Has hopeful signs, provided sufficient effort is made.*

Marker 9

- Marker 9 did not comment at all on any of the essays.

Marker 10

- Essay no.1: *The essay fails to give basic information for the reader to understand the account of the story. This is compounded by some basic grammatical faults and weak spelling.*
- Essay no.2: *The account is fairly clear, but lacks sense of paragraphing and sentence structure. Style is over-simple. Basic grammatical flaws are very noticeable.*
- Essay no.3: *Very confused expression. Vague and lacking in clear examples. Much use of the intrusive "a" at the beginning of a word- characteristic of Arabic speakers learning English.*
- Essay no.4: *The weak grammar and spelling get in the way of understanding an argument lacking in clear examples.*
- Essay no.5: *Some good ideas and example here, spoiled by very weak grammar and spelling.*



- Essay no.6: *Very weak argument and incorrect use of example. Grammar, spelling very weak, constant intrusive initial "a".*
- Essay no.7: *An attempt is made to balance advantage and disadvantages, but the content is there.*
- Essay no.8: *A reasonable attempt to give an account of a film, but let down by poor expression and grammar.*
- Essay no.9: *Very thin in ideas*
- Essay no.10: *A lot of ideas here needing to be developed in clearly constructed sentences and paragraphs.*

## Appendix (14)

Appendix (14) states British teachers' comments on essays 11 - 20. For reasons of focus, teachers' comments on issues related to the content and the communicative functions of one's writing are italicised. This would help me in working out the difference in the nature of comments provided by Syrian and British markers.

### Marker 1

- Essay no. 11: *Although it was understandable, there was not a single sentence without error. Most of the errors seemed to be grammatical/concord. The ideas seemed fairly banal, but there was evidence of structuring.*
- Essay no. 12: *This seemed full of mistakes but fluent- the ideas seemed fairly well expressed. Sentence structure based on 'and' stringing clauses together- endless sentences.*
- Essay no. 13: *Manages to tell the story just about, although it gets quite confusing with pronoun use. There isn't much structure to it apart from the plot of the film. Linkage between sentences could have been more efficiently done on the whole, the story is fairly well told.*
- Essay no. 14: *Quite a sophisticated retelling of the story although there is a few errors of grammar or phrasing, there are some sentences which are competent and well handled.*
- Essay no. 15: *Very repetitious - doesn't really get to say anything*
- Essay no. 16: *Simplistic language choice - doesn't seem to have a range of grammar structures or language to choose from.*
- Essay no. 17: *Seems to have a grasp of the narrative, but doesn't structure the ending at all, and leaves key information out.*
- Essay no. 18: *Sometimes it was difficult to understand what this person meant. One sentence paragraph. There was an attempt to start the essay in a slight original way, but after the initial sentence, it's down hill all the way.*
- Essay no. 19: *There seemed to be a certain level of sophistication here by lack of vocabulary, but the phrasing was very often completely out.*
- Essay no. 20: *The story became incomprehensible in the middle because of the lack of attention to reference/cohesion.*

Marker 2

- Essay no. 11: *Cohesion* - singular/plural agreements, subject/verb (concord) and conjunctions are all incorrectly applied. Prepositions and tenses also. *Poorly organised and argued*. Lexical errors such as 'learn' for 'teach'. Careless spelling errors 'video'
- Essay no. 12: *Incorrect use of conjunctions* (e.g. 'so'), facile agreement, spelling is very good- punctuation is problematic, especially misuse of possessive markers. Lexis not fully controlled e.g.: bad, strength, and unkindness *are not logical*
- Essay no. 13: *Cohesion is the main problem- conjunctions, temporal and clausal, are incorrectly used. Pronouns get very confused, so it becomes impossible to distinguish the characters.* Deixis and prepositions are also problems, and spelling is careless. *Apart from the lack of conclusion or analysis the structure is relatively simple and clear.*
- Essay no. 14: *The structure seems illogical in temporal progression and causal relations, due to inappropriate use of markers of cohesion.* Punctuation is noticeably poor; spelling is O.K. *Register is a problem e.g.: Sorrowful and alas.*
- Essay no. 15: *Facile argument, Cohesion a problem* e.g.: pronouns don't agree with nouns
- Essay no. 16: *Register errors 'once upon a time and in the evening. Spelling errors e.g.: "Sex for six - both have comic effect! the story of the film is not well told, and that is the only structure which sustain the essay.* Regarding grammar- articles are missed out, clauses are incorrectly structured. Word order is weak in places.
- Essay no. 17: Grammar problems with articles, tenses. Punctuation mistakes frequently. *Cohesion problems - causal/temporal markers incorrectly used; incorrect use of substitution, love and feel.*
- Essay no. 18: *Feeble argument, Poor use of cohesive devices - e.g.: causal conjunctions e.g.: 'so', 'get'.* Tenses get confused. Wrong parts of words, dangerous for danger.
- Essay no. 19: *Some cohesive/structuring devices used well. Content low in ideas, but ideas which are present, clearly delivered.* Great many spelling errors, grammar poor, lexis and register cause problems. Articles, tenses and prepositions all present difficulties. Tendency to tautologise.

Essay no, 20: This is much better than the others. *Although there was still no comment or analysis in the content- the storyline was narrated fairly well.* There were grammatical errors with articles, prepositions and tense-changing, but no major ones, and some parts were really very good. *Cohesion was more of a problem - pronouns and conjunctions were sometimes not quite accurately used, leading to confusion. Register was also a problem, perhaps the main one in this essay, e.g.: "cheap" for "poor"*

### Marker 3

Essay no, 11: no comments  
Essay no, 12: *Difficult to follow*  
Essay no, 13: *satisfactory - possible to follow the story, reasonable structure.*  
Essay no, 14: Not far from the pass mark  
Essay no, 15: *very poorly developed*  
Essay no, 16: *very poorly developed*  
Essay no, 17: *story difficult to follow; essay incomprehensible at times*  
Essay no, 18: *difficult to follow and understand.*  
Essay no, 19: nearly a pass, but somewhat careless.  
Essay no, 20: *story difficult to follow.*

### Marker 4

- Marker 4 did not write any comments at all.

### Marker 5

Essay no, 11: *Reasonably well organised with introductory remarks and conclusion. Grammatically very weak - particularly the verbs (tense and agreement with subject) and sentence structure. At times confusing - as in particular paragraph where student has difficulty in expressing her/himself.*

Essay no, 12: *Sometimes, such as the first, are arbitrarily linked by and or so with the result that the essay at times lacks cohesion. In spite of some awkward expressions, there is evidence of competent sentence structure and the argument is comprehensible.*

Essay no, 13: *Reasonably clear account (except where imaginative use of pronouns she/he leads to confusion between the two female characters) of the*

- events in the film but dull and devoid of comment, dullness a result of paratactic sentences as well as repetitious opening phrase: after a day/week/months.,*
- spelling poor and punctuation needs attention, use of commas erratic.
- Essay no. 14: *Simple but clear account of a film. Register diverts towards the conversational- perhaps the subject leads itself to the oral mode. Grammatically competent but sentences tend to be paratactic.*
- Essay no. 15: *Brevity of essay reflects teh students' difficulty in developing ideas. Two of the paragraphs consist of one sentence only and these are not linked to previous or subsequent paragraphs. Sentence construction weak: repeated and at times inappropriate use of "so" to connect ideas.*
- Essay no. 16: *A sketchy account with hurried ending. Potentially interesting account of how/why family falls apart is not given. Problem with tense- decision to narrate in the present a mistake, student is also unsure about the use of both definite and indefinite articles.*
- Essay no. 17: *Brief and bare account of events in the story. No paragraphs reflects students' inability to present information in an interesting manner. Erratic punctuation and minor problems with tense need attention but essay on the whole is comprehensible.*
- Essay no. 18: *Attempt at structuring essay is undermined by poor grammar which makes it difficult to follow the argument. Ability could also be achieved by punctuation more carefully. Potentially interesting points are introduced but these are not developed.*
- Essay no. 19: *Interesting, lively and well-organised essay. Direct address is perhaps not appropriate but the argument is clearly presented in spite of difficulties with prepositions and occasional awkwardness of expression. Good vocabulary but spelling needs attention.*
- Essay no. 20: *Good vocabulary and grammatically competent except for occasional problems with tense and prepositions. Incorrect use of words like cheap, talking in part 1.*

Marker 6

- Essay no. 11: *The student's grammar is weak, verb tenses in particular and an overuse of 'the' and 'that'. Also, I feel that the limited vocabulary seriously affects handling the content. There is no real understanding*

- shown of how to develop an argument.*
- Essay no. 12: This student has a good vocabulary, a better understanding of sentence construction and is therefore *able to present a more sophisticated argument.*
- Essay no. 13: *This student's account of the film reads quite well and can be followed easily.* The main problems are with grammar and spelling. Verb tenses are often wrong. *It also begins sentences with a conjunction too often, i.e. 'but' or 'so'*
- Essay no. 14: This student has a good vocabulary and a better grasp of grammar than most of others so far. *Sometimes the register is incorrect and this renders certain phrases clumsily but good overall.*
- Essay no. 15: This is a very short answer, and *the argument is very simple.* *The student does not know enough vocabulary to be able to present a more sophisticated case.* However, *the main problem seems to be that this student has not reached a sufficiently advanced level to present anything other than a basic piece- although at that level it is O.K.*
- Essay no. 16: The main problems here are with verb tenses, prepositions and *conjunctions* used inappropriately and occasionally *incorrect register.* Vocabulary is also shaky.
- Essay no. 17: *The student tells the story quite well.* Main problems are again grammar, spelling and a lack of vocabulary. However, within these limits, *the student still manages to convey the main storyline of the film.*
- Essay no. 18: *This is probably the best argument so far, for and against TV.* main problems are with verb tenses, misuse of parts of speech (i.e. adjective where it should be a noun etc.) Again inappropriate use of conjunctions and prepositions. Also shaky sentence construction.
- Essay no. 19: Again, *the argument is quite good* but the piece is marked by grammatical errors, inappropriate vocabulary, spelling mistakes and *incorrect register.*
- Essay no. 20: *This can be understood, but the student's vocabulary is very basic and therefore this reads as an outline of the story.*

Marker 7

- Essay no. 11: no comments
- Essay no. 12: I found it hard to read the handwriting on this one.

Essay no. 13: *There is a coherent narrative here which seems to follow closely the events of the film recounted.*

Essay no. 14: no comments

Essay no. 15: no comments

Essay no. 16: no comments

Essay no. 17: no comments

Essay no. 18: no comments

Essay no. 19: no comments

Essay no. 20: no comments

#### Marker 8

Essay no. 11: No command of sentence structure

Essay no. 12: Language is approaching the level of competence.

Essay no. 13: *Language adequate to tell simple story. The student will need to gain a wider vocabulary to learn how to handle a more complex sentence-structure, but is satisfactory on a basic level.*

Essay no. 14: *The retelling of the story is adequate.*

Essay no. 15: *Which programmes are harmful to children, and which not, are never clearly defined.*

Essay no. 16: *The reason for the usual decay of the family is never made clear. The idiom is wooden and un-English.*

Essay no. 17: *The language is adequate to a simple story, though the fact that the big son finally goes to prior is unexpected. Insufficient vocabulary - repetition of great, big instead of eldest.*

Essay no. 18: *Inability to handle argument. Incomprehensible.*

Essay no. 19: *legible (though not pointed up), and able to handle argument on a basic level.*

Essay no. 20: *Able to tell a simple story fairly clearly.*

#### Marker 9

Marker 9 did not comment at all on any of the essays.

#### Marker 10

Marker 10 did not comment at all on any of the essays.

## Appendix (15)

Appendix (15) states Syrian teachers' comments on essays 1 - 10. For reasons of focus, teachers' comments on issues related to the content and the communicative functions of one's writing are italicised. This would help me in working out the difference in the nature of comments provided by Syrian and British markers.

### Marker 1

Essay no.1: *The essay should be divided into paragraphs. The ideas should be developed logically.*

Essay no.2: Much attention should be paid to time sequence, capitalization and the use of articles.

Essay no.3: There should be attention paid to the use of prepositions. *starting paragraphs is not successful.*

Essay no.4: Very bad grammar. Wrong use of prepositions

Essay no.5: Very weak grammar. No capitalization. No knowledge of how to make a question.

Essay no.6: More attention should be paid to the use of articles.

Essay no.7: *No paragraphing.* Much attention should be paid to time sequence and which tense to use after auxiliaries.

Essay no.8: The student has very little knowledge of capitalization.

Essay no.9 The student should make sure of the existence of the subject in each sentence.

Essay no.10: The student should avoid writing long sentences.

### Marker 2

Essay no.1: The essay is weak. The student couldn't differentiate between adj and nouns. He translated a lot from his mother tongue.

Essay no.2: Rather weak grammar (the tenses, conjugation of verbs). Inefficiency in using the articles.

Essay no.3: The use of different preposition in inappropriate places affected the essay.

Essay no.4: very weak. The student was thinking in Arabic while he was writing this essay. The use of the mother tongue is clear.

Essay no.5: very weak.

Essay no.6: Inefficient way of using punctuation. terrible spelling mistakes. The



use of "learn" instead of "Teach": it is a common mistake among students of first and second year.

Essay no.7: The use of the mother tongue is clear.

Essay no.8: Very weak. Bad grammar with bad structures, *confused ideas*. We notice the inappropriate use of prepositions.

Essay no.9: This essay is in fact a small paragraph.

Essay no.10: Many mistakes in conjugating verbs.

### Marker 3

Essay no.1: He/she could not differentiate between the usages of adj and noun. The student begins most of his sentences with "so". This is not to be seen in this paper only, but it is rather common phenomena.

Essay no.2: inefficiency in the usages of punctuations.

Essay no.3: it is very acceptable with no deadly mistakes.

Essay no.4: The effect of Arabic thinking is clearly distinctive.

Essay no.5: no comments

Essay no.6: He tends to write, as most students do, word as it is spoken, or as he pronounces it, e.g.: "resolt". I think that this mistake is common division among all students.

Essay no.7: disjunctive repetition.

Essay no.8: no comments

Essay no.9: no comments

Essay no.10: disability of finding synonyms.

### Marker 4

- Marker 4 did not comment at all on any of the essays.

### Marker 5

Essay no.1: *Student's English is very poor. He doesn't know enough language to express himself clearly. Consequently, the question of "register" does not arise as it presupposes knowledge of adequate English.*

Essay no.2: no comments

Essay no.3: no comments

Essay no.4: *Like all others, the student's English is too poor: he doesn't know enough English.*

Essay no.5: no comments

Essay-no,6: no comments  
Essay no,7: no comments  
Essay no,8: no comments  
Essay no,9: no comments  
Essay no,10: no comments

Marker 6

- Essay no,1: The student lacks the right choice of his/her words. He/she thinks and writes like an Arab does. *There is no need for his/her statement on the film. The essay should be a brief of the film only!*
- Essay no,2: *The short and simple sentences the student used helped him put his/her thoughts clearly. Still he/she lacks the good choice of his/her words.*
- Essay no,3: *Although the student succeeded in dividing his essay into paragraphs, the way he/she was thought to, his/her thoughts were so confused that one feels tired by the end of the essay.*
- Essay no.4: The student succeeded in presenting his/her thoughts in an organised manner. His/her statements are well developed and neatly put together. However, he/she lacks vocabulary.
- Essay no.5: The student thinks and writes like an Arab. One does not feel that he is reading an essay in English.
- Essay no.6: *The student failed to write an organised essay. The introduction extends to cover most of the essay. The student failed in choosing his/her words. For example, he/she used learn for teach, thing for think, and see for watch.*
- Essay no.7: *The student was not able to develop his/her ideas in logical sequence. He/she used long sentences and forgot to develop his/her ideas through paragraphs.*
- Essay no.8: *The student, somehow, succeeded in giving a brief of the film he/she saw. The problem is that the student used too many commas, in his/her sentences, that he/she could not decide where to finish the sentence.*
- Essay no.9: *This is a paragraph on the advantages and disadvantages of TV. Through the few lines which the student managed to script, one is not able to assess the student's performance.*
- Essay no,10: The student was taken away with the subject, so much so that it took him/her ten lines to finish one sentence. The student wrote Arabic composition in English words.

Marker 7

Essay no.1: The essay is well below average. The most serious mistake of this student is his inability to distinguish a noun from an adjective or an adverb; as a result, he produced the following formulas:

"life is full of difficults...", "We must faced the reality by logically and mentally.", "..to fell him of his mother's warm". incorrect use of articles, translating: "to fell him of his mother's warm"

Essay no.2: This written work is weak primarily because of weak grammar and the strategy of translation employed.

(i) interference from the mother tongue:

note these sentences: "Lora bigom to go and back in same place"

"She makes her self died."

(ii) insufficient mastery of comple lexical items:

"he began to pushed the ship to out to his friend."

Essay no.3: weak grammar, e.g.: a children, is relate to, I thinks, is a good programmes, there is not a great films, something don't suitable to their age, it can be useful and amusement.

spelling mistakes: sutabil, usful, most conveient, their is somthing, esseanial.

translating: it can be harmful in somtimes.

Essay no.4: weak grammar: films has a bad...,this mean...

spelling mistakes: they will leve, ..their stuady, to complet

(i) incorrect mastery of some complex lexical items,

e.g.:

TV enjoyed us, enjoyed our time all the day.

films which can learn our children good things.

(ii) *paraphrasing.*

TV by this well lead them to make the criam and to become crimanly children.

TV with this things became a useless thing and will destroyed all the traditions of the good society and children will grow up by the bad things.

Essay no.5: very weak, weak grammar: we can saw in all house, did the TV good or wrong

*paraphrasing.*

we must walk in procrase way

translating:

the education lessons can help to succeed for him school

Essay no.6: The student has a good command of different structural patterns and complex lexical items.

weak grammar, learning them a beautiful things

spelling, duety, parants, forgetting

Essay no.7: This student suffers from (i) inability to distinguish the different parts of speech, e.g.: all children consider TV a very important and necissary thing. (ii) inability to use the right tenses: e.g.: all the eyes gazed and try to catch everything from it, weak grammar, spelling mistakes

Essay no.8: weak grammar, spelling mistakes.

Essay no.9: average, the student is capable of handling difficult structures and vocabulary, e.g.:

These things will disorder their minds.

Sometimes as Simsim, open your doors.

it is very useful to children

Through this programm they know reading, writing and how they can count numbers from one to hundred.

Essay no.10: above average. Generally speaking the grammatical and spelling errors are few. These errors are not major if we do not urge grammatical pedantry but *insist on communicative competence.*

#### Marker 8

Essay no.1: It is full of mistakes of all kinds. *It is too much to ask of a first year student to write 250 words essay. Internal cohesion is almost absent.*

Essay no.2: This not an essay but, to say least, rubbish. He is not aware of the basic rules of punctuation. Spelling and grammatical mistakes are intolerable.

Essay no.3: *he has divided the essay into paragraphs and there is at the end a kind of conclusion. He has presented the advantages, as well as the disadvantages of TV.*

Essay no.4: The writer of this essay, as in the previous ones, *jacks the needed*

*vocabulary to express his/her ideas.*

- Essay no.5: *It is very difficult to make sense of, i.e.: understand what is written.*  
Essay no.6: no comments  
Essay no.7: Parts of speech, i.e. verb, noun, adjective etc. are not understood.  
There is a problem with prepositions.  
Essay no.8: Relative pronouns are missing. The structure of even simple sentences is wrong. The essay is full of literal translation from Arabic.  
Essay no.9: short, messy  
Essay no.10: It seems the whole essay is one paragraph.

Marker 9

- Essay no.1: *A very bad essay, not logically developed. No divisional paragraphs, transition is particularly very poor.*  
Essay no.2: no comments  
Essay no.3: no comments  
Essay no.4: no comments  
Essay no.5: no comments  
Essay no.6: no comments  
Essay no.7: no comments  
Essay no.8: no comments  
Essay no.9: no comments  
Essay no.10: no comments

Marker 10

- Essay no.1: Wrong use of words, wrong use of conjunctions, no title, *no division of the essay into paragraphs.*  
Essay no.2: no title, no balance: *one paragraph is short, another is very short that it turned to be a sentence while other paragraphs are long. We can say that he or she does not know how to build up an essay.*  
Essay no.3: *personal judgement*, no title  
Essay no.4: no title  
Essay no.5: no title  
Essay no.6: no title, weak structure of sentences  
Essay no.7: no comments  
Essay no.8: no title, it seems as if he/she writes in Arabic and then attempts to translate into English.

Essay no.9: no title

Essay no.10: no title, unbalanced, *it has no form of an essay*

## Appendix (16)

Appendix (16) states Syrian teachers' comments on essays 11 - 20. For reasons of focus, teachers' comments on issues related to the content and the communicative functions of one's writing are italicised. This would help me in working out the difference in the nature of comments provided by Syrian and British markers.

### Marker 1

- Essay no. 11: very very weak grammar
- Essay no. 12: The student should take care of the use of articles. The student should avoid the use of the word "so" unless it is necessary.
- Essay no. 13: The student cannot distinguish between "p" and "b"
- Essay no. 14: *The student needs more practise.*
- Essay no. 15: *The student needs more practice.*
- Essay no. 16: The student uses many unnecessary words. The student should pay attention to the use of articles.
- Essay no. 17: *The student needs more practice in writing.* There is no capitalization at the beginning of sentences.
- Essay no. 18: More attention should be paid to the use of prepositions.
- Essay no. 19: *The student talks too much about one thing.*
- Essay no. 20: *There is no organisation of the material given at the beginning of the essay.*

### Marker 2

- Essay no. 11: weak grammar. Inefficient way of using the articles. "an education programmes", "an interesting programmes."
- Essay no. 12: bad writing
- Essay no. 13: not too bad
- Essay no. 14: *He/she has a strange way of narrating the story of the film.*
- Essay no. 15: *A bad composition. Poor ideas and poor style.*
- Essay no. 16: *The way he divided his essay into paragraphs is very bad and his way of narrating the story is even worse.*
- Essay no. 17: no comments
- Essay no. 18: *bad style*
- Essay no. 19: It is acceptable
- Essay no. 20: no comments

Marker 3

- Essay no. 11: boring repetition  
Essay no. 12: no comments  
Essay no. 13: no comments  
Essay no. 14: *This student tries to write his composition reportively.*  
Essay no. 15: *It is written with very weak style.*  
Essay no. 16: no comments  
Essay no. 17: no comments  
Essay no. 18: no comments  
Essay no. 19: no comments  
Essay no. 20: no comments

Marker 4

- Marker 4 did not write any comments at all.

Marker 5

- Essay no. 11: no comments  
Essay no. 12: no comments  
Essay no. 13: no comments  
Essay no. 14: no comments  
Essay no. 15: no comments  
Essay no. 16: no comments  
Essay no. 17: no comments  
Essay no. 18: no comments  
Essay no. 19: no comments  
Essay no. 20: Perhaps I would pass this paper for the few mistakes it has. There is not much language in it though.

Marker 6

- Essay no. 11: *The student failed to develop his/her ideas. Throughout the essay the student was going round the same idea; thus, he/she failed to round off the essay.*  
Essay no. 12: *The essay is, somehow, organised. But, the use of "so" as a conjunction between sentences weakens the internal cohesion. The student thinks and writes like an Arab.*  
Essay no. 13: *The essay is neatly and clearly composed. Yet, the student needs to*



*improve his/her style to write like the English do.*

- Essay no. 14: *The student succeeded in giving a neat clear brief of the film. His/her sentences helped in avoiding grammar mistakes.*
- Essay no. 15: *The student has good ideas, but he/she failed to develop these ideas. The composition is weak and short.*
- Essay no. 16: *The student has written an Arabic composition using English words. Besides, the long and complex sentences he/she used ruined the sequence of tenses.*
- Essay no. 17: *The short and simple sentences the student used in his/her essay helped him/her to avoid grammar mistakes. His/her ideas are clear and neatly put to paper.*
- Essay no. 18: *The student thinks and writes like an Arab. One does not feel that he/she is reading an essay in English.*
- Essay no. 19: *The idea of the student are sensible and the development of those ideas is logical and fluent. Yet, the student needs to improve his/her grammar and to widen his/her vocabulary.*
- Essay no. 20: *The student gave a good brief of the film he/she saw. He/she needs to improve his/her vocabulary.*

Marker 7

- Essay no. 11: *Very weak: The student is good, however, in using linking words and phrases. But he suffers from (i) incomplete mastery of conventional formulas and (ii) from interference from the mother tongue. Grammar is weak. There is also some spelling mistakes.*
- Essay no. 12: *average: The student is capable of using complex syntactical structures, e.g.: TV offers several programmes which can be useful as ...*  
*some idiomatic mistakes: "There are some programmes which...make them go away their study."*
- Essay no. 13: *average*
- Essay no. 14: *Comparatively speaking, this essay deserves praise; the vocabulary and syntax are reasonably advanced. Witness the following phrases:*  
*"the members of the family got close to each others"*  
*"..a dangerous disease prevailed."*  
*"the old man was aware of his illness and that he would die shortly"*  
*"the daughter served him faithfully."*

- Essay no. 15: The student has used some good syntactical structures: e.g.  
 (i) "In some cases, TV can be harmful to children when they misunderstand some programmes."  
 "I myself saw a child who stands in a high place shouting Grandayzar and jumps so his leg was broken."  
 "sometimes, children watch programmes or films which is over their level."
- Essay no. 16: misuse of articles:  
 who is lawyer, who is engineer, thus after few years father had died,  
 insufficient mastery of the use of some lexical items:  
 "learn" instead of "teach" notice the following phrase:  
 "...at the end of the film we notice that good family has become without any virtue and without habits which their father learn."
- Essay no. 17: insufficient mastery of complex lexical items:  
 "she had to work hard to bring her food to her family."  
 "to revenge his father", "he wanted to marry her but she didn't do"  
 omission of articles: her daughter became teacher.
- Essay no. 18: slightly below average, idiomatic mistakes: these return to the responsibility of people, TV can be harmful if we didn't care with our children, to keep our children far from dangerous and harm,  
 weak grammar, spelling mistakes
- Essay no. 19: The student has employed some prefabricated patterns, complex lexical items and a number of phrases made up of verbal compounds, e.g.: "TV is like a sword with two edges, I think in somehow TV increases their knowledge and also makes them think and teach themselves to use their minds.."  
 few grammatical mistakes: they will face fail in their school.
- Essay no. 20: The student is capable of handling a complex structure. Notice the following patterns: "In that moment the ugly man rushed towards him, but the poor man was strong enough to prevent him from doing his murder.", "In the end the last word was said by the poor man; I am a lucky man."  
 incorrect use of prepositions:  
 in the last year, in the moment, in the end of the film.

Marker 8

- Essay no. 11: Some sentences are meaningless because of the grammatical mistakes.
- Essay no. 12: no comments
- Essay no. 13: a lot of spelling mistakes
- Essay no. 14: no comments
- Essay no. 15: short
- Essay no. 16: He has a serious problem with articles.
- Essay no. 17: messy, basic punctuation rules are not observed.
- Essay no. 18: There is a problem with prepositions. Basic punctuation rules are ignored.
- Essay no. 19: The paragraphs are very clear. The basic punctuation rules are somehow observed.
- Essay no. 20: He is well aware of tenses. The essay is a little bit mixed up, i.e. messy

Marker 9

- Marker 9 did not write any comments at all.

Marker 10

- Essay no. 11: no title, it is rather a translation into English than writing in English.
- Essay no. 12: The influence of the Arabic language is obvious, no title.
- Essay no. 13: no title, many of the sentences are borrowed or translated from Arabic.
- Essay no. 14: no title
- Essay no. 15: no title, *no adherence to the form of the essay.*
- Essay no. 16: The influence of Arabic as a native language is obvious.
- Essay no. 17: no comments
- Essay no. 18: The influence of the Arabic language is obvious.
- Essay no. 19: The influence of Arabic is so obvious that many of the phrases sound Arabic other than English. No title.
- Essay no. 20: No title.