
LANGUAGE LEARNING
A
BOOK OF READINGS
FOR
ESL/EFL TEACHERS RESEARCHERS
AND
STUDENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Interference of the first language is considered one of the possible sources of errors and published also many articles in national and international journals in the target language. The error the learner makes will relate closely to his information of an "interlanguage" which s/he uses as s/he progresses in the language learning. They probably arise as a sequence of the linguistic information with which the learner is presented by the textbook or by the instructor who probably mispronounces an English word or makes grammatical errors. Some textbooks introduce the present continuous tense at a very early stage. This may happen because it appears to be the easiest tense to present in the classroom and one of the productive tenses in so far when it can be applied to teach more language items. The presentation in which the linguistic items are presented and the exercises on them probably bring about confusion and/or overgeneralizations. To prove this is difficult. However regarding researches describing language learning and the order of introducing language items in textbooks, the description at least is reasonable. The target language errors actually are to be a sequence of something which happens in the classroom where the learner contacts with the foreign language.

In learning a foreign language, learners are influenced by their mother tongue which probably leads to mistakes in pronunciation and syntax. There are however other psychological circumstances which affect learners in learning the target language. They are presented in the following points: (i) The learner is not required to learn what the instructor believes he is teaching because the learner processes the language information presented

to him by the instructor in his manner. This is probably to some extent decided by the learner's circumstances such as his cultural background, his previous learning experience, his aptitude for the language, his attitude to the target language speakers, his age; (ii) The learner has various learning strategies responding to various teaching methods; (iii) personal circumstances may affect the learner to produce redundant errors; (iv) The learner's motivation is probably integrative and/or instrumental; (v) pronunciation errors are probably connected to the learner's personality and a reluctance may be for sociological reasons to recognize with the target language speakers in order to acquire their accent.

Even for the native speakers, the written forms are more difficult to manipulate effectively and properly than the spoken forms. Learners should be helped to stop making errors by giving them a great deal of language guidance in the early stages. Learners should be encouraged to perform a peer-checking which can assist them to develop their language written form. A code used by the teacher when correcting assignments indicating to the learners the types of errors. They will engage them to more conscious assessment of what they have performed. Briefly, learners' confidence in the language written form will be improved and developed if they are given a chance to practice and use the language in the real situations drawing on an integrated use of all the language competences.

To conclude the language teachers should be aware of all these possible learning problems and be sympathetic towards the learner's circumstances. The learner's performance analysis will help the teacher (i) know exactly how each learner goes about learning the language skills; (ii) monitor the learner's progress; and (iii) offer great individual help as soon as possible.

¹THE ESL/EFL LEARNERS' GRAMMAR ACQUISITION AND THEIR ORAL LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

"Spoken language, as has often been pointed out, happens in time, and must therefore be produced and processed 'on line.' There is no going back and changing or restructuring our words as there is in writing; there is often no time to pause and think, and while we are talking or listening, we cannot stand back and view the discourse in spatial or diagrammatic terms"

(Cook, 1989:115)

"For each occasion on which we speak, there are certain requirements we must seek to satisfy. It is our perception of these requirements that lies behind our purposeful utterances: we pursue a purpose that is in some sense imposed upon us by our reading of the present situation vis-à-vis our listener; and our listener's perception of that situation provides a framework within which to interpret what we say."

(Brazil, 1995:31)

¹ Published at Indian Linguistics: Journal of the Linguistic Society of India, Vol. 71, No. 1-4, 2010, India

ABSTRACT

The current study investigates the hypothesis saying that the 4th level students, who have spent ten years learning English, six years in middle and secondary schools and four years in the English Departments, education faculty and arts college, Tamar University, have no significant relationship between their grammar acquisition and their oral competencies. In addition to the performing the multiple-choice test which is based on the grammatical and spoken tasks which were taught to the students at the first and second levels of the two academic years, 2002/2003 and 2003/2004, they were asked to describe the grammatical rule of each item of the test. The findings of the grammatical rules description and the multiple-choice test accept and support the null hypothesis of the research saying that there is no meaningful relationship between the learners' grammar acquisition and their oral skills. Conversely the means, standard deviations, t-test values ($p < .05$) and F values ($p < .05$) in Tables, (3), (4), (5), (6), (7), (8), (10) reject the study hypothesis and disclose that the all female students have done much better than the all male students in the two faculties. The whole arts college students also are much more aware of grammar and its applications in various social tasks and/or situations.

INTRODUCTION

Grammar and Teaching Materials

The communicative skills' development should contain not only language and study skills areas but also the improvement of grammatical competencies. When somebody knows a language, it is inferred that this person is able to produce correctly grammatical sentences in the target language. Basic interpersonal language skills are probably acquired very quickly whereas literacy- related language competencies which involve a wider and more acceptable manipulation of language structures take a longer time to evolve (Cummins, 1979). For this reason, one can expect difficulties particularly when L2 learners endeavor to understand and communicate effectively in the target language but discover themselves that they cannot do so because of inadequate knowledge of the English grammatical systems and how to use them.

In some language teaching and learning materials grammar to some extent is ignored when presenting other notional, functional and communicative class (Candlin and Edlhoff, 1982; Jones, 1981). It is sometimes practically assumed that the L2 learners have already learned basics of grammatical competencies and thus learning materials rely on the relevant communicative skills' development for differently specific purposes, for instance, Reading and Thinking in English (1980) for South American audience, and Skills for Learning (1980) for South-East Asia. Some books based mainly on structural bases claim that they include communicative and functional competencies presented through materials and learning tasks which depend largely on grammatical accuracy (Harmer, 1989; Huchminson, 1985; Swan and Walter 1989).

Like many scholars, Brown (1987) and Nunan (1987, 1989) have assisted to evolve the theory and practice of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. The L2 learner does not easily learn the language structures and grammatical rules. He is to learn how to apply the language properly. The CLT approach which is one of the most characteristic aspects of the communicative language teaching pays semantics attention to functional and structural features of language. In response towards the grammar translation and audio-lingual methods, the

CLT approach stresses the communicative tasks engaging the real use of language in everyday social situations (Littlewood 1981).

Recent studies reveal that the main part of linguistic competence is innate but the grammar of the L1 should be learned (Humboldt, 1936). The L2 learner of a language has a device producing and interpreting a great number of grammatical sentences. This device which produces and interprets sentences will from now on be defined a grammar. The possible source of errors should be given a particular attention in language teaching. It is possible to avoid the interferences which analyze and classify errors systematically. This can be of greatly important benefit in expecting errors because of the interference. This type of errors can be considered when planning and writing curriculum underlying the communicative skills (Nickel and Wagner 1988). Chomsky (1964) concludes that the L2 competent speaker should be able to recognize grammatical from ungrammatical sentences to produce and perceive unaccountable number of grammatically correct statements which include those which he has never pronounced or heard before. He should be able to determine which sentence is ambiguous and how ambiguous it is. He should know how various statements are connected when a statement is a phrase of another one and so forth. In case the L2 learner of a language has learnt all of the mentioned above and similar competences, it can be said that he masters the target language involved.

Grammar and Meaning

Many linguistic scholars have endeavored to define what the word 'grammar' does mean. English Grammar is mainly syntactic rules determining the arrangement and models within which words are ordered in statements (Close, 1982). Grammatical rules work together to form a grammatical system giving clearly descriptive sentences which make up a language (Smith and Wilson, 1979). Grammar is likely better to look at the relationship of language and communicative abilities and at the meaning which is expected to be transmitted to use. In the definition of their communicative ability model, Canale and Swain (1980) present three elements which interact and influence each other as communicative ability parts; grammatical ability, sociolinguistic ability, and strategic ability. In describing grammar, Leech (1983) states that the elements of

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language use are separated and their interactions are presented. Accordingly, Canale and Swain as well as Leech say that grammar is separated from pragmatic and semantic forces which have an effect on grammar whereas Halliday (1970, 1973, 1978) considers all these forces part of grammar. In Halliday's opinion, the ideational, textual and interpersonal functions are all grammatical aspects in which they arrange the form within which the words are integrated to transmit human message. In the case of modals, grammatical rules justify some shifts e.g. from the strong must to the weaker should. This type of grammatical rules usually gives semantic descriptions at sentence levels which suggest slight differences in meaning (see Table (1)).

Table (1): Description of probability and certainty

Study the examples in 1,2 and 3 below and then put in the letters (a) to (e) according to the descriptions in the box:			
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px;"> (a) It is Certain (b) It is possible (c) It is probable (d) It is certain that not (e) It is unlikely </div>			
1 About the future			
Degree of Certainty	Model	Examples	
Yes (100%)	Will ('ll)	He'll be home before 7, certainly.	(a)
Yes (75%)	Should	He should be home before 7, I think.	—
Yes? (50%)	May	He may be home before 7, but I'm not sure.	—
No (75%)	Might	He might be home before 7, but I doubt it.	—
No (100%)	Won't (will not)	He won't be back before 7, I'm sure.	—

Based on Shepherd, J., Rossner, R,& Taylor, J.(1984)

The importance of grammar is presented in the two following contexts:

He's been living in Yemen for two months.

He's lived in Yemen for two months.

The choice of one of these two statements is based on the terms of semantic distinction. In other words, the selected statements either the progressive or the non-progressive form is based mostly on the speaker's attitude towards the time spent in Yemen. Therefore, the grammatical rule whose function is to extend beyond description of the forms use is purely semantic terms testing uses performed in pragmatic conditions (Givon, 1984; Moore and Carling, 1982). As mentioned before, grammar is the mechanism within which human messages are organized in any oral speech acts. Halliday (1985 pp. 68-7) says that messages are divided into two main kinds, requesting and giving. Requesting is when services or information is demanded as presented in the examples below:

Can I have a cup of tea, please?

Where are you from?

Who is the best in the class?

Giving is the answer to any of these **or** typical demands. In brief, a message has much more than essential information. Accordingly, Bolinger (1977 p.4) states that "Linguistics meaning covers a great deal more than reports of events in the real world. It expresses, sometimes in very obvious ways, other times in ways that are hard to ferret out, such things as what is the central part of the message as against the peripheral part, what our attitudes are to the person we are speaking to, how we feel about the reliability of our message, how we situate ourselves in the events we report, and many other things that make our messages not merely recital of facts, but a complex of facts and comments about facts and situations".

BACKGROUND

In the 1970s and 1980s or so of the 20th century, the L2 acquisition has developed greatly with a lot of published research increased annually. Consequently the accumulated data is increasing the complexity and range of L2 learner task and thus providing a better basis for theory construction. Studies conducted e.g. on universal grammar or acquisitional sequences or grammatical errors are good instances. Such studies have created a greater effect on the L2 acquisition research. Several contemporary models e.g. Krashen's (1982, cited in AL-Fotih, 2007) model and Naiman et al's (1989, cited in AL-Fotih, 2007) model used in the L2 learning in the recent years to manipulate the students' learning situations and the aforesaid problems.

In the 1970s of the 20th century, the empirical studies have disclosed that the L1 is only the main source of errors in second language acquisition. Other sources e.g. are intralingual confusion and faulty pedagogical processes (Sunderman, 1978 cited in AL-Fotih, 20007). Recent studies in the second language acquisition and development have indicated some advantages in proceedings raising students' consciousness of particular grammatical forms. Although there are numerous pedagogic advantages, the communicative teaching method has not created in learners' habits of observation, noticing or conscious description or grammatical forms and functions (Carter, 2004). The findings of Carter's (2004) study are similar to the findings and observations of the linguist whose objective is to expand explanations of the spoken English language. The applied linguists' concerns are based on the most effectively grammatically teaching forms in the communicative classrooms (Sheen, 2002). Like other linguists, Dekeyser (1998) recommends special attention to grammar and subsequent combination of the knowledge supplied in increasingly communicative tasks. Long (1988, 1991) agrees with Dekeyser (1998) and states that grammar instruction has to concentrate on the 'form' referring to the learners' attention to linguistic elements as they emerge in lessons which mainly concentrate on meaning and communication and the 'forms' which refer to the traditional teaching of discrete points of grammar in separate lessons.

The Savignon's (1972) study of effects of classroom training on the development of two traits, language competence and communicative competence. The results disclose that there is no significant difference across the groups on either the language competence tests or the final grade. However, the instructors' ratings show a significant difference ($P < 0.05$) whereas the communicative competence shows a significant difference ($P < 0.001$). The differentiation on language competence is zero percent whereas it is one percent on communicative competence test. This could be considered evidence for the distinctiveness of language competence from communicative competence. Communicative tasks requirements one of which can be included in writing component conducted in Swain's (2001) leading to repeated examples of metalanguage namely talk about parts of language form. In their study of effects of planning on task performance Skehan and Foster (1997) find that with an inherent structure of information, communicative activities and/or tasks create greater accuracy in learners' language whereas more complicated communicative tasks affect the language structure. Conversely, Bygate (1999a, 2001) never finds clear evidence saying that there is an effect of specific communicative tasks on achievement, but simple communicative task repetition does positively affect learners' fluency and accuracy.

Politzer and McGroarty's (1983) correlational study of the communicative competence of Spanish-speaking students in bilingual education programmes, in addition to the TOEFL and the comprehensive English language test, two communicative tests were administered: the active communicative tests and receptive communicative tests. The findings of the two tests indicate that (i) low levels of language competence seem incompatible with high levels of communicative competence; (ii) high language competence never guarantees a high degree of communicative competence; and (iii) different levels of communicative competence are likely at the typical language competence level. As a result there is evidence indicating that there is distinctiveness between language and communicative competence described as separate constructs. In other words, through their study, Politzer and McGroarty (1983), attempt to support the notion of interdependence due to the general tendency for high language competence to correlate with high

communicative competence. In fact the findings of their study recommend the following: (i) the relationship between high language and communicative competence is ascribed to the lower levels of the former which are presented to be largely incompatible with high levels of the latter; (ii) the existence of a minimum low level of language competence is considered as prerequisite for adequate communicative competence; and (iii) the assertion of language competence emerging distinctively from communicative competence due to the latter presupposes the former while the opposite never holds. Depending on their study of the eighty seven students enrolled in ESL class in American universities (eighteen Spanish, sixteen Chinese, eighteen Parisian, ten Japanese and twenty five Arabic) Joup and Kruse (1977, cited in AL-Fotih, 2007) state that there is no significant relationship between the learners' mother tongue and the right English sentence which they produced. Therefore, they argue that the English sentence type is the most reliable predictor of errors.

Other studies related to the distinctiveness between grammatical and communicative competence have been performed by Schulz (1977), Palmer (1979) and Backman and Palmer (1982), the findings indicate that the communicative competence acquisition has occasionally hindered the need to evolve grammatical competence which is described as a main component. However, in the light of empirical studies supporting the grammatical competence considered as an essential construct in a constructural pattern of communicative competence, there appears to be a case for reintroducing grammar at least as organizing foundations in curricula development and practice. Based on his study of observation on talks between a bilingual and a monolingual and between two bilinguals, Weinreich (1953: 81, cited in AL-Fotih, 2007) states that "if both speakers are bilingual interference in their speech is uninhabited." Additionally Smith (1994) argues that about 95% of the L2 learners do not reach the high level of native speakers.

The process of permanent exposure and practice is called fossilization. In brief, 95% of students remain at some interlanguage level which Nemser (1974, cited in AL-Fotih, 2007) calls a suitable intermediate system. Kleinmann's study (1977 cited in Al-Fotih,2007) of Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese and American learners strengthens

Schachter's (1974, cited in AL-Fotih, 2007) opinion and recommends that personality factors, e.g. anxiety, confidence and willingness to take risks indicate when there is a probability for the student to obviate different constructions.

To sum up, pragmalinguistics is used in the study of the more linguistic and pragmatical end of pragmatics whereas socio-pragmatics is used more in the socio- cultural end. These two elements of pragmatic knowledge are necessary to decide appropriateness of second language speech act production (Leech, 1983). The speech act fluency results rapidly from social concepts' transformation and the concepts' articulation. In the speech acts, nonlinguistic social knowledge e.g. the speakers' relationship and interaction goals helps to do planning. As a result, two production dimensions, planning speed and speaking speed are able to jointly promote the speech act fluency (Taguchi, N. 2007).

THE NULL HYPOTHESIS

The null hypothesis which can be rejected at or below .05 or .01 says that the 4th level students of the English Departments, Education College and Arts College, Tamar University (Yemen) have no significant differences in their grammar acquisition and oral language proficiency.

THE STUDY OBJECTIVE

To help the students know their weak grammatical points and how to overcome them; to help English teachers, curricula designers, and writers know where the learners' weakness is if there is.

THE STUDY SIGNIFICANCE

The study findings may indicate that the difficulties in grammar acquisition with which students sometimes get confused. The findings may also guide the curricula designers, writers and English teachers to invent learning grammatical tasks and/or learning grammatical activities

which may make learners able to learn the English grammar easily and quickly and use it fluently in different social situations.

DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

Subjects

The subjects of this study were 91 Education College students and 14 Arts College students of the two English Departments, Thamar University (Yemen). They were in total 105 students. They were mostly between 24-27 years old. The language they speak is Arabic.

Instrument

A multiple-choice test was prepared from the grammatical tasks and/or grammatical activities which the subjects learnt at the first and second levels of the two English Departments in education faculty and arts college, Thamar University. The multiple-choice test is composed of the 27 grammatical items which were divided and categorized into 9 items, Wh-Word, Verb to Be, Verb to Do, Perfect Tense, Modals, Clauses (That-Clause, Complement Clauses), Conditional Sentence. Besides, in their English Departments they had practiced grammar and spoken language for four years through these four different skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing. Accordingly, it was mainly assumed that the subjects could have learnt the English grammar successfully and in the meantime it was expected that the subjects could have answered most, if not all, the 27 grammatical items of the multiple-choice test which they performed in the 1st semester of the academic year, 2005/2006. After conducting the test, they were required to describe each grammatical rule of each item of the test in detail in order to see whether or not there was a correlation between their grammar acquisition and their oral language competences.

Test Reliability

The multiple-choice test was piloted to 5 fourth level students, English Department, Education college and Arts College, Thamar University (Yemen) in the first term, 2005/2006. The KR-20 formula was used to calculate the reliability. It was found 1.04.

Procedures

The multiple-choice test was administered to 91 education college students and 14 arts college students in the first term, 2005/2006. After finishing the test, the subjects were asked to describe the grammatical rules used in all items structures. The statistics which was used in this study is the t-test and ANOVA (analysis of variance). They were used either to accept null hypothesis of the research if it were greater than .05, .01 or to reject it if it were less than .05, .01.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In response to the multiple-choice test centering on the grammatical items, the results display that the correct answers which the students of education and arts colleges made in the description of the grammatical rules of the 27 items of the multiple-choice test are 350 (89.3%) right out of 392 whilst the errors they made are 42 (10.7%) errors out of 392. This indicates that all the students of the two colleges (English Departments) are good at English grammar rules description peculiarly the rules of the grammatical items of the multiple-choice test and in contrast the findings of the multiple-choice test as well reveal that the errors of the arts college students (English Dep.) are more than those of the education college students (English Dep.). The errors which the arts college students committed are actually 351 (53.67%) errors out of 654 whereas the errors of the education college students are 303 (46.33%) errors out of 654. The arts college students and the education college students committed errors mostly in all the 27 items of the multiple-choice test but relatively different in numbers and percentages which are displayed in Table (2) below:

Table (2): Description of frequent errors of education faculty and arts college students

Test Items	Frequent Errors of Education College Students	Percentage	Frequent Errors of Arts College Students	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Wh-Word	2	0.66	-	0.0	2	0.31
Verb to be	34	11.23	37	10.54	71	10.86
Verb to do	12.3	40.59	149	42.54	272	41.59
Perfect Tense	29	9.57	27	7.29	56	8.56
Modals	26	8.57	30	8.55	56	8.56
Future Tense	22	7.26	27	7.69	49	7.49
Clauses: .Complement Wh-Clauses .That-clause	57	18.81	66	18.81	123	18.81
Conditional Sentence	10	3.31	15	4.27	25	3.82
Total	303	100%	351	100%	654	100%

Examples, some of the education college students performed 2 errors (.66%) out of 303 on the grammatical item *wh-word*. They chose the wrong *wh-word*, Who, in order to produce a wrong interrogative statement, Who's her name? They should have selected the right *wh-word*, What, in order to produce the correct interrogative statement, What's her name? while the arts college students did very well in this

item, *wh-word*. In the verb to be item, the education college students made 34 (11.23%) errors whereas the arts college students yielded 35 (10.54%) errors out of 351. Totally the arts and education college students performed 71 (10.86%) errors out of 654. They selected the incorrect choices to produce these following wrong interrogative statements, How do are they?, What she was doing?, How the weather is like today? They should have selected the right alternatives in order to achieve these correct interrogative statements, What are they?, What was she doing?, What is the weather like today? In the item of the verb to do, the arts college students performed 149 (42.45%) errors out of 351 whilst the education college students committed 123 (40.59%) errors out of 303. They totally made 272 (41.59%) errors out of 654. Accordingly, the incorrect interrogative statements which they produced in item, verb to do, are, What does happen outside?, How many people do they live in this house?, What best method he does follow in learning English? However, they should have chosen the correct alternatives in order to yield the following right interrogative statements, What is happening outside?, How many people live in this house?, What best method does he follow in learning English?

Moreover, the education college students (English Dep.) the arts college students (English Dep.) made many errors in the modals item. The arts college students performed 30 (8.55) errors out of 351 while the education college students performed 26 (8.57%) errors out of 303. In total, they produced 56 (8.56%) errors out of 654. Consequently they chose the wrong alternatives of the verbs which follow modals and in the meantime they could not nearly recognize between the subject-operator inversion and verb-subject agreement in all the items of the test and thus they yielded the following incorrect interrogative statements, Could you spelt it?, How well she can speaks English?, Can speaks he any other language? They should have chosen the right choices so that they could produce the following correct interrogative statements, Could you spell it? How well can she speak English?, Can he speak any other language? With the *wh-clauses* item, the complement *wh-clauses* and *that-clause*, the arts college students and the education college students committed a very large number of errors. The arts college students produced 66 (18.81%) errors out of 351 whilst the errors which the education college students produced are 57 (18.80) errors out of 303. The totality of the

education and arts college students' errors is 123 (18.81%) errors out of 654. Again they repeated the same mistakes and errors as they did in the modals item. In other words, they got confused with the subject-verb concord in the complement wh-clauses and that-clause and they considered it as if it were subject-operator inversion and they therefore yielded the following an incorrect interrogative that-clause and incorrect complement wh-clauses, Do you think are you able to be a good learner?, They know where does she usually go, He does not know how does he get there, Tell me where do you live, Tell us how many friends have you got in this college. In order to produce the following right clauses either the interrogative that-clause or the complement wh-clauses, they should have chosen the right alternatives, Do you think you are a good learner?, They know where she usually goes, He does not know how to get there, Tell me where you live, Tell us how many friends you have in this college.

All the errors made by the 4th level students of the two English Departments in the following grammatical items, wh-word, verb to be, verb to do, perfect continuous tense, future tense, interrogative that – clause, complement wh-clauses, a conditional sentence are not attributed to the students' mother tongue but factually to the intralingual interference, developmental strategies and /or overgeneralization. Generally speaking, according to the findings of this empirical study, it is inferred that there is no a significant correlation between the students' grammatical acquisition and their oral language proficiency.

Table (3): Description of means and standard deviations of arts college boys and education faculty girls

	Means	SD
Arts College male Students	11.6	1.67
Education College Female Students	12	4.69

Table (4): Description of the t-test value of the test of arts college boys and education faculty girls

SD	s\bar{d}	d. f.	t-value	*P
0.54	0.17	9	2.35	0.01

*P <0.01

Table (5): Description of the F value of the test of arts college boys and education faculty girls

Source	SS	d. f.	MS	F
Between Groups	0.4	1	0.4	31.13
Within Groups	99.2	8	12.45	-
Total	99.6			

*P <0.05

The results of the multiple-choice test are entirely different from the research's null hypothesis indicating that the 4th level students of the two English Departments in education faculty and arts college, Tamar University (Yemen) have no significant relationship between their knowledge of grammar and their oral language proficiency. The statistical measures, means, standard deviations displayed in Table (3), the t-test value in Table (4) which is 2.35 (p.<.05) for 9 d. f. and the F value in Table (5) which is 5.32(p.<.05) for 1 /8 d. f. are able to confirm that the arts college male students and the education college female students' findings are not the same but completely different. Thus, the education college female students' results are statistically much better than those of the arts college male students in the multiple-choice test which they performed in the academic year, 2005/2006, 1st semester. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected and in the meantime the t-test value and the F value do not support the research's null hypothesis saying that the 4th level students of the two English Departments in the two faculties, education and arts have no significant differences in these

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two language factors, grammatical awareness and oral language competence.

Table (6): Description of means and standard deviations of arts college girls and education faculty boys

	Means	SD
Arts college Female Students	13	3.06
Education College Male students	11.14	6.48

Table (7): Description of the t-test value of the test of arts college girls and education faculty boys

SD	$s\bar{D}$	d. f.	t-value	*P
1.39	0.37	13	5.03	0.05

*P <0.01

Table (8): Description of the F value of the test of arts college girls and education faculty boys

Source	SS	d .f.	MS	F
Between Groups	12.94	1	12.94	1.47
Within Groups	92.8	12	8.81	
Total	105.74			

*P <0.05

The means and standard deviations as well in Table (6) and the t-test value, 5.03 ($p < .05$) for 13 d.f. in Table (7) which rejects the null hypothesis of the research saying that there are no meaningful differences in the students' grammar acquisition and oral language skills indicate that the arts college female students have done significantly well whereas the education college male students have not. However, in Table (8) the F value, 4.75 ($p > .05$) for 1/12 d. f. accepts and supports the null hypothesis of the research.

Table (9): Explanation of means and standard deviations of all education and arts college students

	Means	SD
Education Students	11	1.07
Arts College Students	12	2.67

Table (10): Description of the t-test value of the test of all education and arts college students

SD	$s\bar{d}$	d .f.	t-value	*P
1.68	0.32	26	3.31	0.01

*P < 0.01

Table (11): Explanation of the F value of the test of all education and arts college students

Source	SS	d .f.	MS	F
Between Groups	5.92	1	5.92	0.63
Within Groups	243	26	9.35	-
Total	248.92			

The F value, 4.22 ($p. > .05$) for 1/ 26 d. f. in Table (11) also accepts the null hypothesis of the research whilst the t-test value, 3.13 ($p. < .05$) for 26 d. f. in Table (10) and the means and standard deviations in Table (9) reveal that the art college female and male students' performance on the multiple-choice test is much better than that of the education college female and male students. Strictly speaking, according to the findings of this current empirical study, the arts college students proved that they are much more acquainted with the English grammatical items of the multiple-choice test and more able to use them fluently in oral language than the education faculty male and female students.

CONCLUSION

The results of the grammatical rules description test show that all the students of the two English Departments in education faculty and arts college are good while in the multiple-choice test are poor. The errors which they committed in the grammatical rules explanation are 42 (10.7%) errors out of 392 whilst the errors that they performed on the multiple-choice test are 654 (100%) errors out of 654. This indicates that the students of the two English Departments in the two faculties know the grammatical rules but they cannot use them well in either spoken or written form.

In relation to the findings analysis of the multiple-choice test, the statistical measures, the means, standard deviations, t-test values and F value in Tables (3), (4), (5), (6), (7) refuse the null hypothesis of the research and reveal that the female students of the two colleges (English Departments) have done much better than the male students. Although the frequent errors and their percentages in Table (2) point out that the education faculty students have done much better in the multiple-choice test than the arts college students. The statistical factors, the means, standard deviations and t-test value in Tables (9), (10) reject the research's null hypothesis and disclose that the arts college students have much more awareness of grammar and its practical use in different tasks and/or different social situations.

All the errors committed by the English Departments 4th level students are not attributed to the students' mother tongue interference but actually to the intralingual interference, developmental strategies and overgeneralization. In white's (1974, cited in AL-Fotih, 2007) and Dulay and Burt's (1974, cited in AL-Fotih, 2007) study on children's L2 acquisition show that the first language interference accounts for only 4.7% of the children' s errors whereas the developmental strategies account for 87.10%. At first and second levels of the English Departments, the students may have not been exposed to enough exercises on the grammatical items presented in Table (2) which might help the students master them. Duskuva (1969, cited in AL-Fotih, 2007) and Bhatia (1974, cited in AL-Fotih, 2007) believe that in many cases, the errors of the target language learners are due to the lack of learning rather than the interference from the mother tongue.

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APPENDIX

(a) Read the following sentences carefully and then choose the letter (a), (b), or (c) to fill in the blanks.

(b) Describe the grammatical rule of each item of the test.

(c) If you cannot, write I don't know.

1-her name?

a) Who's b) How's c) What's

Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

2- Could youit?

a) Spell b) spells c) spelt

Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

3-they?

a) What do are b) How did were c) What are

Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

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4- do?

- a) What does she b) What she did c) What she does

Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

5-like
today?

- a) Where the weather is b) What is the weather c) How the
weather is

Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

6- How well.....English?

- a) She can speaks b) she could spoke c) can she speak

Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

7- What three things.....do yesterday?

- a) you did b) did you c) you does

Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

8- doing?

- a) What was she b) What she is c) What she was

Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

9-work?

- a) Where they do b) Where they did c) Where do they

Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

10- When?

- a) they did work b) do they work c) they do work

Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

11-like the building which is in Taiz Street?

- a) Do Ali and Sami b) Ali and Sami does c) they do work

Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

12- How long.....been living in Yemen?

- a) Jill does have b) Jill has had c) has Jill

Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

13- Whatdo when you leave here today?

- a) Will he b) he did c) he does

Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

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14-going to do for their next holiday?

- a) Where they are b) What are they c) How they are
Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

15- What foreign countriesvisited?

- a) Have your friend b) has your friend c) your friend
has

Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

16- Who.....to?

- a) does she speak b) she does speaks c) she speaks
Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

17- Whatoutside?

- a) does happen b) happen c) is happening
Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

18- How many people.....in this house?

- a) do they live b) did they live c) live
Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

- 19- How long.....?
a) they stayed b) did they stay c) they did stay
Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

- 20-any other language?
a) Could speak he b) Can speaks he c) Can he speak
Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

- 21- What best methodsin learning English?
a) does he follow b) he does follow c) do he follow
Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

- 22- Do you think a good learner?
a) are you b) you are c) are you able
to be
Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

- 23- They know

- a)where does she usually go b)where did she usually go
c) where she usually goes

Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

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24- His friend's house is against the national Bank. But he does not know there

- a) how to get b) how does he get c) how did he get

Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

25- Tell melive.

- a) where do you b) where you c) where did you

Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

26- If you were very rich, for your village?

- a) What you would do b) what you could do c) what would you do

Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

27- Tell us how many friendsin this college.

- a) you have b) have you c) do you have

Grammar rule explanation:

.....
.....
.....

²THE SEMANTICS OF THE CENTRAL MODAL VERBS: A STUDY OF THE 4TH LEVEL STUDENTS

"Somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew that "w-a-t-e-r" meant that wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand.

(Helen Keller, The Story of My Life)

"But let's not forget that a word hasn't got a meaning given to it, as it were, by a power independent of us, so that there could be a kind of scientific investigation into what the word really means. A word has a meaning someone has given to it.

(Ludwig Wittgenstein, The Blue Book)

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ABSTRACT

The 4th Level one-hundred-one students had learned English for six years, three years at a preparatory school and three years at a high school. Besides, they were taught the central modal verbs intensively in the spoken English course at level two of the Department of English in the first semester of the academic year, 2005/2006. The prepared test having four parts, present-future possibility test, past possibility test, permission test and obligation test was administered to the learners to test them if they still remember how to use the central modal verbs. The findings reveal that the numerous errors the learners committed in the whole test is 1665 errors out of 3030 that is 55 percent. Additionally, the findings indicate that the learners' knowledge of the central modal verbs usage is significantly very poor. The whole errors completely done by the learners on the central modal verbs test are attributable to either the intralingual or the developmental interference rather than the mother tongue interference.

INTRODUCTION

The modal verb is used to modify a sentence or a clause syntactically and semantically. More clearly the modal verb such as *may*, *can*, *will*, *must* is used to add a linguistic meaning to a clause or a sentence. For example, it will rain soon. Adverbs as *possibly*, *probably*, *perhaps*, *certainly*, *likely* are called modal adverbs and adjectives as *probable*, *possible*, *certain* are called modal adjectives. The modal verb term also includes the subjunctive mood and the past verb forms applied to explain a hypothetical meaning that is to say that the situation is unlikely to happen or has not happened (McArthur, T., 1998).

Examples:

- (i) I wish I *had* a new car.
- (ii) If I *knew* her, I *would speak* to her.
- (iii) If you *had worked* hard, you *would have succeeded*.

The English modal verbs such as *must*, *should*, *can* largely replace the subjunctive mood and they can be classified as follows:

1-Epistemic modality describing a judgment about the proposition truth,
examples:

- (i) She *may* be in her room.
- (ii) It *might* get too difficult.
- (iii) It *must* be him on the phone.
- (iv) They *ought to* have heard by now.
- (v) The movie *should* be over soon.
- (vi) That *will* be the instructor.
- (vii) Who *would* have guessed she was old?

2-Deontic modality involving the giving of directives in terms of permission and obligation.

Examples:

- (i) You *must* go now.
- (ii) You *can* go now.
- (iii) *Could* we go now, please?
- (iv) He *may* leave now.
- (v) You *might* have another one.
- (vi) He *must* be patient.
- (vii) He *ought to* write more often.
- (viii) She *needn't* say anything.
- (ix) The boss *shall* have my resignation letter tomorrow. (a promise or a threat)
- (x) He *should* write more legibly.

3-Dynamic modality attributing to such properties as ability and volition to the subject of the sentence.

Example:

- (i) Tom *can* drive a car.
- (ii) Ali *couldn't* drive after 5:00 pm.
- (iii) She *daren't* tell her parents.
- (iv) They *shall* allow no obstacle to impede their programs.
- (v) We *will* stay as long as we wish.

4-Central modal verbs are *may, might, can, could, will, would, must, shall, should*.

5-Marginal or semi-modals are *dare, need, ought to, used to*.

The same modal verb is often used for more than one type of modality, e.g. *may* for possibility and *must* for necessity and obligation.

Examples:

- (i) It *may* rain this afternoon.
- (ii) The plane *must* have landed by now.
- (iii) He *must* go.

Besides, the central modal verbs and marginal or semi-modals have these following properties:

- (i) They are auxiliaries
- (ii) They don't have third person-s form e.g. He can go , They can go contrast, He goes, They go.
- (iii) They don't have nonfinite, no infinitive, -ing participle or -ed participle. Thus in standard English they can take the initial position in the verbal phrases and they are not able to go with each other in spite of double modals e.g. *might could* go are used in some dialects, for instance the southern US English.
- (iv) Only are these two modals *ought to*, *used to*, followed by the bare infinitive (McArthur, T., 1998).

Examples:

- He *could* go.
- He *used* to sleep early.

These marginal or semi-auxiliaries, *be able to*, *be about to*, *be bound to*, *be going to*, *have (got) to*, can be used as nonfinite forms and therefore they can conveniently replace modals in nonfinite position for example, the use of He *may be able* to see you tomorrow rather than of the impossible, He *may can* see you tomorrow. Two or more auxiliaries can occur in sequence, e.g. He *is going to have to* complain.

6-Modal idioms

The modal verbs are divided into present tense and past tense forms. The present tense forms are *may, can, will, shall* and the past tense forms are *might, could, would, should*. They are mainly used to describe tentativeness or conditionality instead of past tense. Therefore, there is no time difference between, He may see me later, and He might see me later, or between, Could you pass the salt? and Can you pass the salt? But the past forms, *might, could, would, should*, are used in indirect speech for past tense (McArthur).

An example:

He *may* see me later is reported, He said that he *might* see me later.

7-Modal adjuncts

They are classified by Biber et al. (1999:853-875) with some frequent examples of actual modal adjuncts.

(a) Epistemic adjuncts

Actuality/reality: actually, really, in fact

Doubt/certainty: maybe, perhaps, I think

Imprecision: about, roughly

Limitation: generally, in most cases

Source of knowledge: according to X, apparently and

Viewpoint: in my opinions, in my view

(b) Attitude adjuncts

Evaluation: unfortunately, hopefully

Expectation: I guess, inevitably and

Importance: importantly

(c) Style adjuncts: simply, honestly

However, these modal verbs, *must, dare, need, ought to* have no past forms. The Epistemic modals can use *have* when describing the past time of the proposition. Examples:

- (i) Ahmed and Tom *may/might have* been at home.
- (ii) We *must have* seen him.
- (iii) The pilot *will/would have* landed by now.

The deontic modals, *should have, ought to have* describe the past obligation usually with implication that it was not conducted.

Examples:

- (i) We *ought to have* phoned but we didn't.
- (ii) She *should have* come in but she didn't.

Dynamic modals, *would* (was willing to) and *could* (was able to) are applied to past time in negative contexts,

Examples:

- (i) She *couldn't* type.
- (ii) She *wouldn't* help him.

Another use of *would* is that it can be applied to the hypothetical conditional sentence,

Examples:

- (i) If I *were* you, I *would accept* it.
- (ii) If he *had seen* her, he *would have been shocked*.
- (iii)

In British English, *should* is sometimes applied to the 1st person subject instead of *would*, e.g., (i) If she *had found* it, I *would have reported* it. *Should* is also used in description of necessity and intention and the like, e.g., I insist that she *should* stay at home.

Modality can be used in many ways. Modality can be introduced in a way through which the meaning of a clause or a sentence reflects the speaker's probability judgment of the proposition that truly describes. The compelling factors of modal verbs meaning can be classified into two kinds:

- (i) Those such 'permission', 'obligation', and 'volition' which involve some kind of intrinsic human control over events, and
- (ii) Those such as 'possibility', 'necessity', and 'prediction', which do not primarily involve human control of events, but do typically involve human judgment of what is or is not likely to happen (Quirk, R. et al., 1985, P. 219).

Each one has both intrinsic and extrinsic uses. For instance *may* has two meanings, permission (intrinsic) and possibility (extrinsic); and *will* has two meanings, volition (intrinsic) and prediction (extrinsic). Nevertheless, there are two terms, the overlap and neutrality between the intrinsic and extrinsic senses of a modal verb. For example, the *will* in this sentence, we'll see you tomorrow then perhaps to integrate the meanings of volition and prediction. They significantly have overlapping meanings. For instance, *should ought to* are really exchangeable with meanings of obligation and tentative reference. *May* and *can* relatively overlap to the meanings of permission and possibility but this overlap is completely specified to formal English and these modals in particular are very far from any change (Quirk, R. et al., 1985).

The perfective and progressive forms with modal verbs are excluded when explaining ability or permission and as well when *will* and *shall* explain 'volition'. These forms are applied to extrinsic modal meanings other than 'ability'.

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'possibility', examples:

- (i) She *may/might have* missed the bus.
- (ii) Tim *can't/couldn't be* riding the horse.

'Necessity', examples:

- (i) You *must have* left your bag on the bus.
- (ii) He *must be* dreaming.

'Prediction', examples:

- (i) They *will/would have* arrived by the time.
- (ii) Ahmed *will/would* still be reading the fiction.

Only can 'obligation' be explained with the perfective or progressive forms when integrating with *ought to* or *should*.

'Obligation', examples:

- (i) He *ought to be* working now (but he isn't)
- (ii) She *should have* finished it (but she hasn't)
- (iii) You *should have* not left them (but you did)

It is possible to integrate perfective and progressive aspects with the modals, examples:

- (i) She *must be* dreaming.
- (ii) You *shouldn't have been* reading all night.
- (iii) They *would have been* arriving by now.

The extrinsic/intrinsic contrast not only applies to all modals but also to various marginal modals constructions. For instance *must* or *should* has necessity and obligation meanings so do the marginal modals.

Examples:

- (i) The program is *bound to* fail. (must inevitably, necessity)
- (ii) Their brother is *supposed to* be the best. (should be)

Marginal or semi-auxiliaries have nonfinite verb forms meaning in that two or even more modal concepts may be integrated in a series of verbal phrases: It is normal for an extrinsic modal verb to come before an intrinsic one as shown in the following examples:

- (i) You *may have to* play it again (possibility)
- (ii) We *should be able to* buy enough food (tentative, inference, ability)
- (iii) We *must have been willing to* help (necessity, volition)
- (iv) They *are going to have to be able to* play three different tools. (prediction, necessity, ability)

Modal idioms, with less common verbal constructions, are the four-multi word verbs, *had better*, *would rather*, *have got to*, *be to*. They begin with an auxiliary verb and are followed by an infinitive and sometimes preceded by (to). They do not have nonfinite forms too.

Examples:

- (i) He'd better leave soon. (advisability, obligation)
- (ii) He'd rather leave soon. (volition, would prefer)
- (iii) He's got to leave soon. (obligation, logical necessity)
- (iv) He had got to leave soon. (BrE but not AmE)
- (v) He's to leave soon. (expressing futurity)
- (vi) He was to leave soon.

The modal idioms are actually able to fill slots in a modal verb paradigm whereas modal verbs of equivalent meaning never take place (Quirk, R. et al., 1985), e.g. they are unable to climb the tree. [can =ability].

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Longitudinal studies present that children start to apply modal verbs such as *think*, *may/might* or *may* be from 3;6 (Doitchinov, S. 2004). The beginning of acquisition of epistemic meanings is systemically related to the evolvement of the represented theory of mind. Evolvemental studies present that the theory of mind is continuously acquired in the fourth and fifth year of life (Wellmann, H. M., 1990). If children cannot perceive that there is no one-to-one mapping between the real world and mental worlds, they are likely unable to apply and perceive epistemic modals (Doitchinov, Serge, 2004). Additionally, other experimental studies have said that epistemic modals describing uncertainty are not reliably perceived by children under 8;00 years old, and that children under 8;00 years old intend not to recognize between epistemic terms describing *certainty* and *uncertainty* (Green, 1979; Abedutto and Rosenberg, 1985; Bassano et al. 1992; Noveck 2001 (Cited in Doitchinov, S. 2004)) In fact, other experimental studies conducted by several scholars such as Piaget and Inhelder (1957), Green 1979), Pierraut-Le Bonniec (1980) and Byrnes & Overton (1986) cited in Doitchinov, S., 2004) argue that children, under 8;00 years old, perhaps have difficulties distinguishing the concept of uncertainty particularly when a specific situation is ambiguous. Other experimental studies, however, done by Sommerville et al. (1979) and Sophian & Sommerville (1988) (cited in Doitchinov, S. (2004) provide the opposite result and state that children under 6 years old can distinguish when they do not have adequate information to select between several possibilities. The Noveck's (2001) study stated that children's deficiency to perceive the epistemic modals is not due to their cognitive deficiency to deal with uncertainty but rather to their incapacity to understand the pragmatic meaning of the input sentences. The Noveck's (2001) study result also suggests that children under 7;00 years old equally attribute certainty and uncertainty to the modal verb *might*. The Doitchinov's (2004) study results indicate strongly that children under 8;00 years old, can't control the epistemic modals because they are unable to understand the epistemic uncertainty. Doitchinov (2004) makes a comment and states that the experimental studies are designed to require too much meta-cognitive and meta-linguistic abilities from the tested children. Sophian and

Sommerville (1988) add that the more pragmatic the context is, the easier it is for the child to think about two possibilities at a time. All epistemic modals are completely rare in adult language and particularly in child language.

Epistemic modality is concerned with knowledge, belief or opinions instead of fact (Lyons, 1977). Coates's (1983) study results indicate that epistemic modality is concerned with the speaker's guesses or assessment of possibilities and in most cases, it points out the speaker's confidence and/or lack of confidence in the proposition truth. The term epistemic modality should use any system indicating the degree of commitment by the speaker s/he says. It is described by presenting the status of the speaker's perceiving or knowledge including clearly both his judgments and the type of warrant s/he has for what s/he says (Palmer, 1980). Makkanen and Schroder (1997) define the relationship between modality and hedging and they add that it seems possible to see the relationship between the most epistemic modality and hedges in two ways in which either modality is a wider concept and includes hedges or the other way in which hedging is the umbrella term and epistemic modality apart of it. Besides, Huddleston and Pullum (2002) and Biber (1999) state that modal verbs occur other linguistic description of modality possibly referred to as modal descriptions or stance markers including modal adjective, *possible*, *likely*, nouns, *possibility*, *necessity* *permission*, modal adverbs, *certainly* , *undoubtedly*, *possibly* and other verbs, *require*, *seem*, *insist*, *appear*.

Mathews, P.H. (2005) defines the term modality as “covering either of kind of speech act or the degree of the certainty with which something is said.” Palmer (2001:1) states that modality is a valid cross-language grammatical category which can be the topic of a typological study. Modality is possibly defined as the way in which the meaning of a sentence is qualified in order to express the speakers judgment of the likelihood of the proposition truth it expressed (Quirk, et al. 1985). Bybee and Fleischman (cited in Panocova, R., 2008) determine that modality is a difficult topic to define particularly in cross-language studies an account of the extent to which languages differ in their mapping of the relevant semantic content into language form.

Talmy (cited in Ferrari, L. V., 2002) states that the semantics of root modality is best perceived in terms of force dynamics. This notion essentially indicates the linguistic description of forces and barriers for instance, permission represents taking a way of a potentially present barriers e.g. *may*, *let*, *allow*, whereas obligation relates to a compelling force which direct the learner to choose some specific act, e.g. *must*, *ought to*, *have to*, *need to*. Sweetser and Talmy (cited in Ferrari, L. V., 2002) argue that modal verbs don't have two separate senses but precisely present an extension of the essential root sense of the epistemic domain. Thus, the correspondence is presented as follows:

Root	Epistemic
Obligation	Necessity
Permission	Probability
Ability	Possibility

Sweetser (cited in Ferrari, L. V., 2002) makes a comment and says that our reasoning processes are undergone to obligations, permission and abilities just as our real world actions are undergone to modalities of the same kind. Modality is a cover term for all those language descriptions imposing an international force by taking some clear perspective to some specific event, action or reasoning process. So, modality can be encoded by various language explanations in a language (Ferrari, L.V., 2002), examples:

- (i) Phonological markers, e.g. pitch, intonation etc;
- (ii) Inflectional morphology, e.g. mood, aspect, etc;
- (iii) Morphological class, e.g. modal verbs, hedges etc; and
- (iv) Syntactic forms, e.g. adverbial clauses.

According to her study of double modals (DM) conducted in 1989, Di Paolo states that:

- (i) Not all speakers of DM varieties have all of the modals presented below in Table one as a part of their linguistic competence;
- (ii) The four most repeated double modals are *might could*, *might should*, *might would* and *might oughta*;

- (iii) The individual modals in double modal constructions have never obviously defined interpretation in the double modals dialect speakers' minds;
- (iv) A triple modal which is, *might woulda had oughta*.

In her descriptive study of DM usage of African American Vernacular English and Southern American English in Texas, Dipaolo expresses twenty three different combinations of attested modal verbs presented in Table (12) which explains how the acceptability of these constructions varies between speakers.

Table (12) Description of twenty three different combinations of modal verbs (taken from Dipaolo, 1989)

may could	might oughta	oughta could	might supposed to
may can	might can	use to could	might've used to
may will	might should	should oughta	musta coulda
may should	might would	would better	might woulda had oughta
may supposed to	might better	better can	
may used to	might had better		
may need to	might could		

Dipaolo (1989) states that there are no semantic reasons why modals occur where they do; therefore, she points out that modals are stored in the lexicon as one syntactic unit mixed into the construction at the same time. Additionally, she states that this is the most possible description for the distribution of the individual modals in double modal structure.

Modals may lie in present time even when they have past tense morphology. The modal verbs are a perfect-present verbs whose perfect morphology is compatible with the present construction. Like other auxiliaries, modals fix with tense in English syntax (Gueron, J., 2008). The modal verbs, inherently imperfective choose an infinitival

complement bounding the interval which they define at either the assertion time (for states) or a posterior time (for events) (Ibid, 2008). The modal sentence is impersonal as is shown in deontic epistemic sentences below (Ibid, 2008):

- (i) It must rain or the crops will be destroyed.
- (ii) There must be six books on that desk.
- (iii) There must be something wrong with the boy.
- (iv) Time will fly, like it or not.

It is usually difficult to determine which modal verb to use. Many books have been written about their meanings and when to use them and still L2 learners rarely get them right, linguists and grammarians always explain what they mean. Many experiments have been conducted to figure out central or basic meanings for every modal verb expressing their common usage. Other studies results reach three or four meanings for every modal usage. The majority of recent works have endeavored to describe the varieties of meaning for every modal verb. There is a generic English modality, never used so frequently, to describe overall properties and controlled by some L2 learners (Hofmann, Th. R. 1999).

The study of English modality is one of the most stimulating areas which make philosophers and linguists always inquiry. The literature reviews on English modality stress the permanent necessity for analysis of this main part of human language and thought. The modality's scope and treatment notion is dependent on whether the inquiry is mainly philosophical or language based. However, language investigation is established experimentally and scientifically and examines the modality concepts in terms of the human attitudes and behavior from which they are extensively concluded. The modals have a large scope of meanings which the grammatical rules express the modal concepts of possibility, probability, necessity as well as the connected concepts of permission obligation , volition. In comparison with other modal expression, the modals are ready to formal definition and analysis and they are the most grammaticalized exponents of the modality system in English (Hofmann, Th. R. 1999). There is no doubt that English has a set of modal verbs that can be formally defined (palmer 1986:33). "The modal verbs are syntactically distinct from other modal expressions. The study of modals

is often regarded as synonymous with the study of modality itself for the meanings expressed by the modal verbs in English represent, to a large degree, those that are to be included in typological account of modality” (palmer 1990:2). Modality can present itself in many ways and there is rich potential for the connection of varied modal elements in the sentence or clause (Hoye, L. 1977). Modality is not, then, necessarily marked in the verbal elements, nor is there an obvious reason why it should be, apart from the fact that the verb is the most central Part of the sentence. Modality does not relate semantically to the verb alone or primarily, about to the whole sentence (Palmer 1990).

The semantics of the modals is an extremely complex area (Hoye, L. 1997). In his English modals survey, Nagle, S. (1989:95) makes a comment and says that “even a brief review of the ongoing debates regarding the semantics of the modal expressions in general, reveals the resistance of this area to succinct expressions.” Varied and often related meanings are conveyed by the modals. Palmer (1990:15) agrees and states that “there is no a priori reason why there should be a single meaning; it is more likely that there is a conglomeration of vaguely related meanings.” Perkins (1983), Hudleston (1971) and Kenny (1975) (cited respectively in Hoye, L. 1997:77) add that “they criticize proposals in terms of six distinct meanings for *May* or ten for *Can* arguing that this would imply the modal system of English tends towards semantic anarchy.”

A large number of language and philosophical descriptions of modality have initially concentrated on the syntactic and semantic behavior of the modal verbs or treated the concept and phenomenon of modality in terms of modal logic. Language research still aims to write on the semantic instead of the syntactic forms of the modals (Hoye, L. 1997). This case study investigates the use of central modal verbs particularly present-future possibility, past possibility, obligation, permission and only ability is excluded because it is expected that the students know semantically how to use it.

THE STUDY OBJECTIVE

- To know the students' weaknesses in the modal verbs usage if there is.
- To help the students know that the modal verbs usage are an important skill in either spoken or written English.

THE STUDY SIGNIFICANCE

The research results may (i) indicate the central modal verbs usage difficulties (CMVUD) with which the learners always get confused and (ii) guide the English curriculum designers, writers and teachers to take into their account the central modal verbs usage difficulties (CMVUD) when writing the English Language curriculum.

NULL HYPOTHESIS

The 4th level male and female students of the English Department have the same Central modal verbs usage understanding.

THE STUDY DATA COLLECTION

1) Subjects

The one-hundred-one subjects were the 4th level male-female students. They were between 21-24 years old. Their mother tongue is Arabic. They were given the central modal verbs test which consists of four parts or sections as a mid-term test on May 17th, 2008. They are based on present-future possibility, past possibility, permission and obligation tests.

2) Instrument

The central modal verbs test (CMVT) having four present-future possibility, past possibility, permission and obligation tests, prepared to test the students' central modal verbs usage understanding was administered to the one-hundred-one students as a mid-term test on May, 17th, 2008.

3) Statistics

The statistics which was used in this study is two types, the percentage which clearly explains the values and differences found in the sample's performance test and/or examination and the t-test value telling both the researchers and readers whether or not the differences between the means of the four parts of the test, present-future possibility test, past possibility test, permission test and obligation test is significant.

4) Validity

The central modal verbs test was administered to the same five students twice on March 1st, 2008, and on April 1st, 2008. The correlation coefficient (ρ) calculated is 0.70. Then the test is highly valid.

5) Reliability

KR-20 formula was used to calculate the test reliability. It was found that it is 1.00. Then the test is valid, reliable and applicable.

6) Procedure

The central modal verbs test (CMVT), divided into four parts or sections was administered to the one-hundred-one students as a mid-term test on May 17th, 2008 to test the students' understanding of the central modal verbs usage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The central modal verbs test results reveal that the subjects have committed numerous errors in the test which consists of four parts, *present-future possibility*, *past possibility*, *obligation*, and *permission tests*. For instance, in the past possibility test, the item (28), “*It is possible that someone stole your car, Someone ----- could have stolen it,*” does not need any correction, but the blank left in the sentence structure gets the subjects confused. They selected one of the three choices, *would*, *could*, *will* to fill in the blanks. According to their wrong answers, the subjects are classified into three groups. They are as follows:

Group1- *Someone could could have stolen it;*

Group2- *Someone would could have stolen it;*

Group3- *Someone will could have stolen it.*

Only are four subjects out of one-hundred-one subjects able to perceive that the sentence structure, someone could have stolen it be correct. These errors the subjects committed in the CMVT are developmental rather than interference. They actually indicate that the subjects are not completely aware of the Central modals usage. They may have not exposed to practical exercises on central modal verbs usage.

Table (13) Description of errors frequency and their percentages

Items	Errors Frequency	Percentages
Possibility (1)		
Could	263	15.80
should	300	18.01
ought to	200	12.01
		45.82
Possibility (2)		
could have	115	6.90
must have	100	6.01
can't have	96	5.77
		18.68
Obligation		
should	119	7.15
ought to	92	5.53
Must	100	6.01
		18.69
Permission		
may	171	10.27
Can	109	6.55
		16.82
Total	1665	100.00

Table (13) in detail exhibits the errors which the subjects performed on each part of the central modals test with their percentages. For example, the highest number of errors that the subjects made in part one of the test, present-future-possibility test is 763 errors out of 1665, that is, 45.82 percent. And the lowest number of errors that the subjects did in part four of the test, permission test is 280 errors out of 1665, that is, 16.82 . the total number of errors which the subjects achieved in the

four parts of the test, present-future possibility test, past possibility test, obligation test and permission test, is 1665 errors out of 3030, that is to say, 55 percent. Figure (1) too presents clearly each section with its errors frequency.

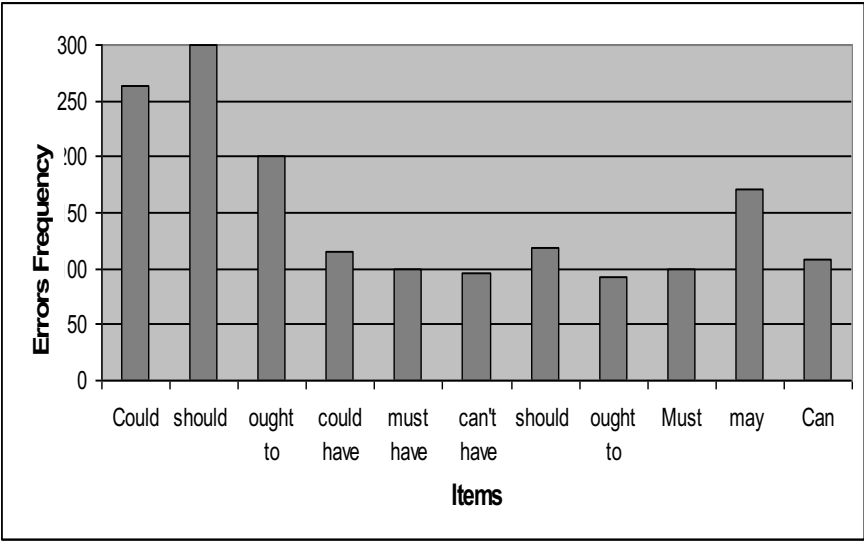


Figure (1): Description of frequency of errors and their percentages

Table (14) Description of subjects' performance on present-future possibility test vs past possibility test

Means	Variance	SD	\bar{SD}	t-test	d.f.	P*
7.6 3.1	4.93	2.33	0.70	6.43	9	0.01

P* = 0.01

Table (15) Description of subjects' performance on present-future possibility test vs permission test

Means	Variance	SD	\bar{SD}	t-test	d.f.	P*
7.6 2.8	3.07	1.75	0.55	8.73	9	0.01

P* = 0.01

Table (16) Description of subjects' performance on present-future possibility test vs obligation test

Means	Variance	SD	\bar{SD}	t-test	d.f.	P*
7.6 3.2	19.04	4.36	1.38	3.19	9	0.01

P* = 0.01

In Tables (14), (15) and (16), the statistical measures, means (76/3.1, 7.6/2.8, 7.6/3.2), variances (4.93, 3.07, 19.04), standard deviations (2.33, 1.75, 4.366), standard error of differences (0.70, 0.55, 1.33) and the t-test values (0.01, 0.01, 0.01) reject the researcher hypothesis saying that there are no differences in the male and female subjects' performance on the present-future, possibility test vs past possibility test, presented in Table (14), present-future possibility test vs obligation test presented in Table (15), and present-future possibility test vs obligation test presented in Table (16) and they confirm the alternative hypothesis pointing out that there are significant differences in the four parts of the test indicating that the test results the students scored are statistically significant.

Table (17): Description of subjects' performance on permission test vs obligation test

Means	Variance	SD	\bar{SD}	t-test	d.f.	P*
2.8 / 3.2	1.38	1.18	0.37	1.08	9	0.5

P* > 0.05

Table (18): Description of subjects' performance on past possibility test vs permission test

Means	Variance	SD	\bar{SD}	t-test	d.f.	P*
3.1 / 2.8	1.04	1.02	0.32	0.938	9	0.5

P* > 0.05

Table (19): Description of subjects' performance on past possibility test vs obligation test

Means	Variance	SD	\bar{SD}	t-test	d.f.	P*
3.1 / 3.2	2.77	1.66	0.53	0.187	9	0.8

P* > 0.05

On the contrary, in Tables (17), (18) and (19), the statistical measures such as means (2.8/3.2, 3.1/2.8, 3.1/3.2), variances (1.38, 1.04, 2.77), standard deviations (1.18, 1.62, 1.66), standard error of differences (0.37, 0.32, 0.53) and the t-test values (1.08, 0.938, 0.187) cannot reject the researcher's hypothesis stressing that there are no differences in the male and female subjects' achievement on these tests, permission test vs obligation test, past possibility test vs permission test and past possibility test vs obligation test confirming the researcher's hypothesis emphasizing that there are no differences in those tests because the t-test values are

greater than the 0.05 or the 0.01. In other words, the results the male and female subjects scored are quite similar and insignificant. This indicates that the subjects know nothing about the central modal verbs usage. They are completely very weak in the usage of the central modal verbs. Generally speaking, they may have not been exposed to empirical sufficient exercises on the central modal verbs. The high numbers of errors the male-female subjects committed in the four parts of the test is attributed to the intralingual interference.

Table (20): Description of male and female subjects' performance on present-future possibility test

Means	Variance	SD	\bar{SD}	t-test	d.f.	P*
7.2 / 8	3.6	1.90	0.60	0.42	9	0.8

P* > 0.05

Table (21): Description of male and female subjects' performance on obligation test

Means	Variance	SD	\bar{SD}	t-test	d.f.	P*
3.00 / 3.4	2.84	1.69	0.54	0.74	9	0.5

P* > 0.05

Further, regarding the male and female subjects' performance on these two tests, the present-future possibility test and the obligation test respectively presented in Tables (20) and (21), the statistical measures such as means (7.2/8, 3.00/3.4) variances (3.6, 2.84), standard deviations (1.90, 1.69) and the t-test values (0.8, 0.5) do not refuse the null hypothesis stating that there are no differences in the male and female subject's achievement on the two tests and they point out that the research hypothesis is correct because the t-test values are greater than the 0.05 or the 0.01. This points out that both the male and female subjects have no idea about the Central modal verbs usage, particularly, present-future possibility and obligation.

Table (22): Description of male and Female subjects' performance on past possibility test

Means	Variance	SD	S \bar{D}	t-test	d.f.	P*
3.4 2.8	0.23	0.48	0.15	4.00	9	0.01

P*=0.01

In contrast, in Table (22), the statistical measures, means (3.4/2.8), variance (0.23), standard deviation (0.48), standard error of differences (0.15) and the t-test value (0.01) refuse the researcher hypothesis pointing out that there is no difference between male and female subjects' results in the usage of the central modal verbs and state that in past possibility test the female subjects' result is much better than the male subjects. The results the subjects particularly the female subjects scored in the past possibility test is statistically significant.

CONCLUSION

With reference to the results analysis of the four parts of the test which the male and female subjects scored are extremely below an average which in each test respectively represents 16.55 percent, 18.67percent, 18.69 percent, and 45.82 percent (see Table (13)). This point out that male and female subjects' knowledge in the central modal verbs usage is much worse than is expected. The statistical measures, in Tables (14), (15), (16), such as means, variances, standard deviations, standard error of differences and the t-test values confirming the significant difference of the results that the subjects scored apparently show that the subjects either males or females' performance on the four sections of the test is quit unsatisfactory. On the contrary, in Tables (17), (18), (19) they state that the researcher's hypothesis is correct because the t-test values (0.5, 0.8, 0.5) are greater than the 0.05 or 0.01. In addition, only in Table (22) do they state that the female subjects have scored much better results in the past possibility test than the male subjects while in Tables (20), (21) they confirm that all the subjects have scored similar results in present-future possibility and obligation tests. These statistical

measures indicate what the male and female subjects have done is significantly very poor in the usage of the central modal verbs. Generally speaking, the numerous errors that the male and female subjects have committed in the four parts of the test are actually either intralingual or developmental interference rather than the first language interference.

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APPENDIX

Q- Choose the appropriate answer.

1. If John looked hard, he-----find a job.
a) could b)will c)shall
2. Bob -----visit us if he could.
a) should b) will c)would
3. I -----do the work if I could.
a) will b) should c)would
4. If something -----go wrong, I want to know about it.
a) would b)should c)could
5. If student -----fail in the exam, he can take it again.
a) could b)would c) should
6. -----Sami borrow your book?
a) Will b) May c) Would
7. Tim -----borrow your motor tomorrow morning.
a) would b) can c) will
8. Ali-----borrow my car tonight.
A) will b) may c)would
9. -----I borrow your book you bought last.
a) May b) would c) will

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10. -----We smoke in class?
a) Will b) Would c) May
11. People -----not smoke near gasoline.
a) should b) would c) must
12. Mrs. Tom -----visit her husband in the hospital.
a) would b) will c) should
13. You -----not forget your mother's birthday.
a) can b) must c) should
14. All living things----- have food and water.
a) should b) must c) will
15. He -----visit his friends once a week.
a) would b) can c) ought to
16. Foreign students-----have visa to come to Yemen.
A) would b) can c) must
17. People -----have a passport to travel to most foreign countries.
a) can b) should c) must
18. Everyone -----have a driver license to drive a car.
a) should b) can c) must
19. Amira left school an hour ago. She -----be home by now.
a) will b) can c) should

20. I mailed the book five days ago. They -----have it by now.
a) would b) should c) will
21. Our brothers said that they were arriving this week. They -----
-- be here any day now.
a) will b) can c) ought to
22. Jill studied hard for the test. She -----get a good grade.
a) would b) will c) ought to
23. We were expecting our brothers to come this week. They -----
be here any day now.
a) will b) should c) can
24. Ali went to the library this morning. He -----be studying
there now.
a) ought to b) would c) will
25. The teacher explained the lesson carefully. The students -----
not make any mistakes.
a) will b) would c) should
26. My watch says it is only 20 past one. It -----have
stopped.
a) should b) would
c) must
27. He has only spent ten minutes in that job. He -----have
done it properly.
a) shouldn't b) can't c) mustn't
28. It is possible that someone stole your car. Someone -----could
have stolen it.

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a) would

b) could

c) will

29. I -----have gone out somewhere but I was too tired.

a) would

b) can

c) could

30. He was very lucky. There -----have been a terrible accident.

a) would

b) can

c) could

³THE IMPACT OF TRANSLATION IN DEVELOPING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

Newmark (1995) makes his comment on the classroom translations and recommends that “translation is for discussion.”

(Newmark, 1995).

Translation process is a matter of adding and refining knowledge which includes the four language skills as well as vocabulary.

(Ward, 1992).

People using languages as an instrument of their professions such as translators and interpreters are required to learn languages much more deeply than others.

(Goff -Kfour, C.A., 2005).

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ABSTRACT

The 4th level students of English in the two academic years 2004 and 2005 were unable to talk. The learners were divided into groups and required to perform class mini-talks on linguistic and cultural issues and ideas which are found in the SL/TL translated texts. The same translation test was administered to the 2004 students as well as 2005 students. The result revealed they had been highly proficient in conversation as well as in other skills.

INTRODUCTION

Some studies (Weikel and Mangram, 1994; Larson, 2000; and Larson and Barker, 1996) were meant to examine the distinctive nature of discussion have indicated that there are different types of discussions which vary in purpose, content and format. Larson, B.E., and Keiper, T.A. (2002) state that classroom discussions (CD) serving several educational purposes require learners and teachers to talk back and forth and exchange ideas of subjects being discussed. They also believe that the CD is a useful teaching technique for developing thinking skills enabling learners to interpret, analyze, manipulate information, describe their thoughts and ideas rather than only recite memorized detailed facts. The classroom discussion presented with probing, open-ended questions require learners to fit the available information for the purpose of their defensible answers. The purpose of these probing questions and discrepant viewpoints is to encourage the learners to interact with each other and respond with the most powerful evidence which are available to them (Larson, 2000). Engle and Ochoa (1988) suggested that the questions below which should be evident in classroom discussions are: (i) definitional questions (what does that mean?), (ii) evidential questions (What reasons can you give for your belief?), (iii) speculative questions (What if that hadn't happened?) and (iv) policy questions (What should be done?). Like other scholars, Cazdan(1988) emphasizes that in classroom discussions there is an immediate feedback to whatever is said. The C.D nurtures critical thinking and moral judgments (Gall and Gall 1990; Newman, 1988, Power, Higgins and Kohlberg, 1989) assists

learners to know the subjects being discussed (Miller, 1992; Tharp and Gallimore, 1988) and teaches the competence of discussion (Bridges, 1979; Dillon, 1994; Welin, 1990).

Moreover, since the classroom discussions enhance and develop the learners' English language skills, the translation teachers should encourage their students when translating texts to give mini-talks by which they can express the texts' meanings and/or messages which the author wants to transfer to the reader in the meantime discuss the cultural and linguistic elements which are often found in the texts. Like other scholars, Newmark (1995) makes his comment on the classroom translations and recommends that "translation is for discussion." Additionally, Kussmaul (1995) agrees with Newmark and states that "the ability to discuss translations in an objective way is central to a translator's practice."

Translation's impact is seen particularly in helping learners acquire and develop their practical language skills. Translation is actually a receptive and simultaneously reproductive linguistic activity. The translation courses are designed to develop practical and marketable skills for the foreign language student. In the translation process the learner always practices pronunciation, builds up his passive and active vocabulary, deepens his comprehension and perfects his writing skills. Additionally, the translation helps students to communicate properly, that is, after all what lies at heart of foreign language learning (Cordero, A.D.1984). Translation process is a matter of adding and refining knowledge which includes the four language skills as well as vocabulary (Ward, 1992).

Translation as a matter of fact is often used as a test tool to evaluate language learning (Buck, 1992). The principal goal of translation or interpretation (TI) is to communicate meaning accurately (Rubrecht, B.G., 2000). There are three principal areas of translation: (i) educational area is used to verify comprehension, (ii) professional area is used to help others rather oneself understands and (iii) linguistic area is used for research, that is, for linguistics analysis (Vinay and Darbelnet 1958).

Having others understand meaning, Massoud (1988) recommends that translation students should concentrate on these two questions about the source of language message.

- (i) What does it mean? and (ii) how should it be said in the new (other) language?

He adds that a good translator does not attempt to reproduce the formal order of words or phrases nor does he attempt to find one-for-one sets of verbal correspondence. What a good translator aims at is a faithful reproduction of the original so that the meaning of message and its spirit is probably communicated satisfactorily. Translation involves the skills of written language whereas interpretation involves the skills of spoken language. A translator transposes written materials in one language into written form in another language. This requires understanding subject-specific terminology and having awareness of style and grammar, regional language and nuances and idiomatic expressions (Hammond, D.L, 1992). In the future, translation students will be prepared in the technical subjects and provided with excellent writing skills in English and translation. People using languages as an instrument of their professions such as translators and interpreters are required to learn languages much more deeply than others (Goff -Kfour, C.A., 2005).

In order to get across the meaning, the translator is required to deeply understand the cultural connotation of the word. Vocabulary limitations also can be simplified and placed into two categories: Word meanings from a linguistic perspective and word meanings from a cultural perspective (Rubrecht, B.G., 2000). Regarding the cognitive approach, learning is not only the recall of facts but also involves memory, reasoning, critical thinking and problem solving all of which are applicable to the daily activities of translator or interpreter (Goff Kfour, 2004). Students should be encouraged to talk through their learning process. The learners centered-classrooms which give the students the chance to use the following (Svinicki's (1997 cited in Goff-Kfour, 2005) six principles of cognitive learning:

1-Students must see the information to be learned as important to their lives. Implication: the instructor must show the students how this information is beneficial.

2-During learning, learners act on information to make it more meaningful. Implication: instructors and students should clarify information through examples, images, elaborations and links to prior knowledge.

3-Learners store information in long-term memory in an organized fashion related to their existing understanding of the world.

Implication: instructors should provide an organized structure in their presentation of information.

4-Learners constantly check understanding which results in refinement of what is retained.

Implication: instructors should provide opportunities.

5-Transfer of learning to new contexts is not automatic; it results from exposure to multiple applications.

6-Learners who are aware of their learning strategies and monitor their learning habits will learn more rapidly.

Implication: instructors should help students become aware of how they learn.

Many studies conducted have presented clearly how motivation enhances learning (Good. T. and Brophy,1991). Good teaching and good learning alike are so dependent on language and communication that the two are inseparable (Hodge, 2000,P.1). A good translator should have a comprehensive knowledge of source as well as target language. Since writing is the main work of a translator, s/he should be acquainted with the writing skills. In addition, s/he should be acquainted with different requests, styles of speaking and social stratification of the two languages (Razjou, 2002). The social context in text translation may be a more important variable than its genre.

The language study is one of the oldest fields in education. The four main factors of culture are language, communication, translation and education which have been examined since 1600 b .c when linguists were questioning the source of language (Fromkin and Rodman, 1998:26). Many linguistics textbooks still amazingly start with statements such as “we know only this” “there is a lot we do not know” or “yet unknown mechanisms”. Scholars are still attempting to decide how people acquiring their mother tongue and what parts of that mechanism are, if any, are transposed when learning a second or third language. (Goff-Kfour, C.A., 2005). Regarding neurolinguists, the principal language centers lies in the left hemisphere of the brain (Fromkin and Rodman, 1998:56). Broca’s areas in the front, Wernicke’s area in the back and the angular gyrus also lies in the back of the brain are renown to play the basic role in human being’s language proficiency (Steinberg, 1993 cited in Goff-Kfour, 2005). Accordingly translation trainers should be aware of the elements which influence language learning and take them into their consideration when planning their classes.

Sociolinguists, studying language and how human beings learn it, think there are psychological social and probably genetic factors which may help learners progress quickly than others. Specialists in semiotics add that verbal and nonverbal elements tell how learners probably learn languages (Hodge, B. 2000).

According to his work which may no longer be universally agreed upon, Noam Chomsky has made most of hostile attacks into language theory learning. Regarding Chomsky, there are several language universals: (i) all languages are learnable, (ii) all languages share some characteristics and (iii) there are rules and principles which the speaker clearly carries out in producing sentences. Translation trainers have to take care of points two and three. They also have to help students recognize the characteristics all languages share and use them in their translation tasks. In order to make translation work easier the instructors should help their students know how to use the language rules properly. Chomsky stated that there is a distinction between language competence and language performance. Competence is the knowledge of the language grammar that the learners have while performance is the language ability through

which the learners can produce and use their competences (Stenberg, 1993, cited in Goff -Kfour, 2005).

Understanding how adults may learn a language perfectly, the researchers have deeply searched the ways through which children acquire language and have founded some correlations. These main correlations appear to stem from the knowledge which helps children understand their mother tongue before they actually speak it, children pick the rhythm, pitch stress and melody of the language and imitate the lyrics of the language before they actually speak it fluently first by saying words, then two –word units, grammatically incorrect sentences and finally logical, correct expression of meaning (Steinberg 1993 cited in Goff- Kfour, 2005).

Besides, to understand a language before speaking it, memory is very vital. Children always learn languages more rapidly when they can see the object, hear the sound of its name and then internalize its meanings in their minds for further retrieval. Additionally Fromkin and Rodman (1993) stress that creating plays an important role in the language acquisition. There are probably some primitive similarities between human and animal language but animal language is finite and the messages are stimulus-controlled. Human beings can write fiction, poetry and sing songs in duets and choirs while animals can't.

Research on second or foreign language is progressing extremely quickly. Repetition and mechanical drills were the essence of language learning curriculum until the Chomsky research emerged. However, classroom drills were found inadequate. At present logic and communication are stressed and/or recommended.

NULL HYPOTHESIS

There is no difference at language skills between:

1. the 4th level male-female students of English in the year 2004
2. the 4th level male-female students of English in the year 2005

3. either the 4th level students of English in their 2004 or the 4th level students of English in their 2005

THE STUDY OBJECTIVE

- To help students talk fluently.
- To know the students weaknesses in the translation process (TP) if there is.

THE STUDY SIGNIFICANCE

The research results may point out the difficulties in the translation process (TP) which the learners often get confused with. They also will guide the curricula designers, writers and teachers to take into their consideration the translation process difficulties (TPD) which the students often suffer from.

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

I taught the same translation course to the students of the English Literature Department in 2004/2005. The translation course content was scientific, literary and social texts. They were in English and the learners' mother tongue. The students aged between 22 and 26 and their mother tongue is Arabic. They were 40 students in 2004 and 45 students in 2005. The students were broken up into small groups. The method used in teaching translation was an input-transition-output. This method was divided into three phases. The first phase is an input within which each group was asked to skim the texts presented to be translated and orally describe them in English. According to their oral presentations, the groups were linguistically and informatively graded A, B, C. The second phase is a transition in which the learners were required to scan the texts,

retranslate them and focus on the questionable cultural and linguistic issues and verbally describe them in English. In case they got confused with these issues, they were advised to ask the instructor. The third phase is an output within which all learners in each group were required to explain the writer's purpose and their impressions of the translated texts verbally and in written English.

Materials

The translation test was prepared to test and evaluate the students' ability in translation. The translation test, which was in the learners' mother tongue (Arabic), centers on phrases and sentences. It was administered to the 2004 students and 2005 students too.

Test Reliability

The translation test was piloted to ten- fourth- level students, English Literature Department, Faculty of Arts, Thamar University (Yemen) in the second term, 2004. The KR-20 formula was used to calculate the test reliability. It was found 1.04.

Procedures

The translation test consisting of Arabic phrases and sentences in the learners' mother tongue was administered to 40 and 45 students in the second term respectively in 2004/2005. The statistics which was used in this study is t-test. It was used to see if there was a difference between the students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the translation test, the 2004/5 students attempted to translate all the Arabic phrases and sentences into English. But their translation of the phrases and sentences into English were wrong because the English phrases and sentences did not transfer the right meaning of the Arabic phrases and sentences. Besides, the context of the English phrases and sentences were grammatically and meaningfully unacceptable. In other

words, the phrases and sentences which were translated from Arabic into English could be somewhat understood when reading them. Here are some samples of mistranslated Arabic phrases (*beshaq al-anfus* بشق الأنفس for with the greatest difficulty, *fardh ain* فرض عين for individual duty, *ala aras wal ain* على الرأس والعين for with pleasure) taken from the students' translations and presented in groups (A,B, C) respectively.

Group (A): (i) difficult for selves, (ii) with difficult self, (iii) by hard work

Group (B): (i) fixed duty, (ii) religious duty, (iii) eyes duty

Group (C): (i) above eye and head, (ii) on the head and the eye,

(iii) you are over my head and eye

The students should have translated the Arabic phrases (*fardh ain*, *ala aras wal ain*, *beshaq al-anfus*) into these English phrases; individual duty, with pleasure/very gladly, with greatest difficulty. They, however, could not. Again both 2004 students and 2005 students mistranslated the Arabic phrases (*behar haiga*, *sena? thakelah*, *shahe thakeel*, *modakhen mofret*, *sobatoon ameeq*) into English. These Arabic phrases which were translated wrongly are in the following groups:

Group (D-1)

behar haiga بحار هائجة

(i) roaring seas

(ii) excity seas

(iii) wild seas

Group (D-2)

sena?thakelah صناعة ثقيلة

(i) making heavy

(ii)heavy trade

(iii) weigh industry

Group (D-3)

shae thakeel شاي ثقيل

Group (D-4)

modakhen mofret مدخن مفرط

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| (i) weigh tea smoker | (i) extensive |
| (ii) thicken tea | (ii) excisive smoker |
| (iii) concentrated tea | (iii) smoker by far |

Group (D-5)

sobatoon amEEK سبات عميق

- (i) deep sleep
- (ii) deep slumber

Group (D-6)

ala aher min al-jamr

على احر من الجمر

- (i) on hotter embers
- (ii) on hot brand
- (iii) on life coals

In their translation for these Arabic phrases (*behar haiga, sena? thakeelah, shahe thakeel, modakhen mofret, sobatoon amEEK*), the students depended on literary translation. This is why all translated phrases in groups (D-1 to D-6) are mostly wrong. Additionally, the learners did use bilingual dictionaries, Arabic-English and/or English-Arabic dictionaries which do not contain Arabic collocations at all.

Moreover, the 2004 students and the 2005 students mistranslated the short and long sentences and they committed the same errors. The translation of short phrases as well as long sentences the learners translated literally is completely wrong. Also the structures of the short and long sentences are mostly grammatically incorrect. Some short and long Arabic sentences with their translation taken from the students' translation test conducted in 2004/2005 are presented in the following categories:

Short sentences:

- 1- *ga? ni be nafsiihe (beainiie)* meaning: "He came personally to see me."
 - i. He came without invitation.
 - ii. He came by his desire.
- 2- *mala? aineh* meaning: "He satisfies him."
 - i. He filled his eyes.
 - ii. He contented his eye.
- 3- *nadhras ilaihe behtekar* meaning: "He looked at him contemptuously."
 - i. He saw him in contempt glance.
 - ii. He looked at him with disdain.
- 4- *nazala min ainieh* meaning: "He lost his respect for him."
 - i. He falls down of my eye.
 - ii. His values fell from my eye.

Long sentences:

- 1- *maktab al shahn wa tafrigh moghlak fi ?ayam aljom?*
 - i. The office of consignment and emptiness is closed on Fridays.
- 2- *astlama intharan shaded allahga besabab ghiyabeh amotakerer*
 - i. He received a strong dialect notice regarding his repeated absence.
- 3- *assera? alkaabali khateroon ala estikrar almokata?*

- i. The tribal fight (struggle) is dangerous to the stability of the county.

The students mistranslated mostly both the short and long Arabic phrases and sentences because (i) all the Arabic phrases and sentences are Arabic collocations, (ii) these Arabic phrases and sentences were translated literally and (iii) the learners did use only Arabic –English and/or English-Arabic dictionaries which have neither English nor Arabic collocations description. The dictionaries which were used by learners during the translation test are:

1-ENGLISH ARABIC AL-MAWRID AL-QAREEB BEIRUT, LEBANON

2-ATLAS DICTIONARY ENGLISH-ARABIC ARABIC-ENGLISH BEIRUT, LEBANON

3-EDWARD ELIAS DICTIONARY ARABIC-ENGLISH BEIRUT, LEBANON

Table (23): 2004 female-male students test result comparison

4 th level students	Means	Variances	SD
Males	13.6	0.47	0.69
Females	11.6	1.57	0.76

Table (24): Description of 2004/2005 students t-test probability

V	SD	d.f.	\overline{SD}	P*
0.58	0.76	9	24.24	0.05

P* = 0.05

Nevertheless the results of the translation test (TT) which both 2004 students and 2005 students achieved are completely different from the researcher's null hypothesis saying that the students' competence in translation in the two academic years, 2nd semester, 2004 and 2005 was the same. The statistical measures such as means, variances and particularly standard deviations can give exactly statistical information presented in Table (23) and Table (24) which confirm that the 2004 students'(males and females) results are not identical but entirely different. Also the t-test with 9 d.f. is 2.56 and p equals 0.05. So the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore the male students were significantly much better than the female students in the translation test which they accomplished in 2004.

Table (25): 2005 male-female students test result comparison

4 th level students	Means	Variances	SD
Males	12.8	0.78	0.89
Females	13.2	0.55	0.74

Table (26): Description of male-female students t-test probability

V	SD	\overline{SD}	d.f.	P*
0.622	0.79	0.25	9	0.05

$P^* > 0.05$

Moreover Tables (25) and (26) present the translation test result (TTR) which was administered to the 4th level students in the 2nd term, 2005. The statistical measures in Table (25) particularly the standard deviation with its square root indicates that the female students did better than the male students. Additionally, the t- test value with 9 d.f. is 1.67,

then $P < 0.05$. So the null hypothesis stating that there is no difference between, either the 4th level male students or the 4th level female students was completely rejected. Therefore the translation test (TT) produced different results between the 4th level students either males or females which they conducted in the 2nd term, 2005.

Table (27): 2004/2005 female-male students test result comparison

4 th level students	Means	Variances	SD
Females 2004	11.6	0.57	0.76
Males 2005	13.2	0.55	0.74

Table (28): Description of 2004/2005 female-male students t-test probability

V	SD	\overline{SD}	d.f.	P*
2.05	1.35	0.64	9	0.05

$P^* = 0.05$

Table (27) as well shows the translation test result (TTR) which the 4th level students (males and females) performed in the 2nd term, 2004 and 2005. The statistical measures in Table (27), the variances and standard deviations emphasize that the male students were significantly much better than the female students in the translation test result (TTR) which they performed. Again in Table (28) the t-test value with 9 d.f. is 2.50, then the $P=0.05$. Consequently the null hypothesis was rejected and the translation test produced totally different results.

Table (29): 2004/2005 male students test result comparison

4 th level students	Means	Variances	SD
Males 2004	13.8	0.79	0.89
Females 2005	12.8	0.47	0.69

Table (30): Description of 2004/2005 male students t-test probability

V	SD	\overline{SD}	d.f.	P*
5.5	2.35	1.05	9	0.05

$P^* < 0.05$

Furthermore, Table (29) and Table (30) describe the students' performance on the translation test which was administered to the 4th level students in the two academic years, 2nd semester, 2004 and 2005. The variances and standard deviations in particular can offer usefully statistical information which the means can't. They clearly indicate that the 2005 female students significantly scored better results in the translation test than the 2004 male students. In addition in Table (30) the t-test value with 9 d.f. is .95 where probability value is $P < 0.05$. So the null hypothesis saying that the difference between the samples is zero was rejected. It is assumed that the translation test which the 2004 male students and the 2005 female students conducted produced completely different results.

Table (31): 2004/2005 students test results comparison

4 th level students	Means	Variances	SD
2004	12.7	2.38	1.54
2005	13	1.78	1.33

Table (32): Description of 2004/2005 students t- test probability

V	SD	\overline{SD}	d.f.	P*
2.46	1.57	0.497	9	0.01

P* = 0.01

Table (31) and Table (32), however, statistically explain both the 2004 students and the 2005 students' achievement in the translation test (TT). Since the standard deviation can tell exactly the statistical information which the mean can't. It is more important than the mean. Both the statistical elements in Tables (31) and (32) say that the 2005 students were significantly much better in the translation test (TT) than the 2004 students. The t-test value with 9 d.f. also is 3.6, then the probability value equals .05. Therefore the null hypothesis saying that there is no difference between the 2004 students and the 2005 students too was rejected and the translation test (TT) which the students performed in 2004 and 2005 produced entirely different results.

CONCLUSION

Through the findings and statistical measures, it could be inferred that the students were very weak at translation because they tried to translate word for word when translating Arabic phrases and sentences into English. They should have looked at the whole meaning of Arabic phrases and sentences and translated them but they didn't. Another point is that the learners depended on Arabic-English and/or English-Arabic dictionaries which they don't have Arabic and English collocations description. However, generally speaking, regarding their inadequate performance on the translation test, the learners cannot be blamed because the translation process is very tough. Gerding-Salas (2000) and Kussmaul (1995) agree with this opinion and state that the most frequent difficulties which the students get confused with are: (i) comprehension, sense and ideas, (ii) lexico-semantic level, (iii) morpho-syntactic level, (iv) writing style and register, (v) spelling and punctuation, (vi) creative solutions to translation problems, (vii) transfer and re-wording (use of translation procedures), (viii) cohesion and coherence, (ix) assessment of the result and post-edition, and (x) format. Consequently the researcher strongly recommends the following points which should be provided in translation curriculum and/or in translation process:

1. Teaching translation should be made two periods a week instead of one.
2. The translation curriculum designers, writers, and teachers should take into their consideration the collocations usage in English as well as in Arabic, and mini- social talks in pre-university English education and at the first and second level of the English department.
3. Translation references, monolingual and bilingual dictionaries which contain English and Arabic collocations should be made available for both teachers and students.
4. Translation teachers have to let their students know the following points at the beginning of each term.

- a. The students have not to expect to be competent at translation while they are still at university.
- b. Translation students should be healthy.
- c. It is necessary to know another language but not sufficient for performing translation.
- d. Performing translation is part of the language learning process.
- e. The objective of translation students is to make readers understand.
- f. Not all translation assignments and/or tests are interesting to every student.
- g. Students should keep the objective of the translation assignment in mind.
- h. Translation ability requires much more than word meanings comprehension.
- i. When translation done, it should be reread, reanalysed, reassessed several times.
- j. All in all, translation requires practice.

Further researches

Other researches should be done on translation impact in developing English language learning.

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APPENDIX

Arabic collocations: phrases

Group (A):

beshaq al anfus meaning: with the greatest difficulty/barely

- (i) difficult for selves
- (ii) with difficult self
- (iii) by hard word

Group (B):

fardh ain meaning: individual duty

- (i) fixed duty
- (ii) religious duty
- (iii) eyes duty

Group (C):

ala ras wa alain meaning: with pleasure/very gladly

- (i) above eye and head
- (ii) on the head and the eye

(iii) you are over my eyes and head.

(iv) welcome on the eyes and head

Group (D)

behar haiga meaning: heavy seas

(i) roaring seas

(ii) excity seas

(iii) wild seas

Group (E)

Sina?thakelah meaning: heavy industry

(i) making heavy

(ii) heavy trade

(iii) weigh industry

Group (F)

shahe thakel meaning: heavy tea

(i) weigh tea

(ii) thicken tea

(iii) concentrated tea

Group (G)

modakhen mofret meaning: heavy smoker

- (i) extensive smoker
- (ii) excusive smoker
- (iii) smoker by far

Group (H)

sobatoon ameeek meaning: heavy sleep

- (i) deep sleep
- (ii) deep slumber

Sentences

Short sentences

1. *ga-ani benafsihe* meaning: “He came personally to see me.”
 - (i) He came without invitation.

2. *ga ani beainihe* meaning: “He came personally to me.”
 - (i) He came by his desire.

3. *mala 'a aineh* meaning: “He satisfies him.”
 - (i) He filled his eyes.
 - (ii) He contented his eyes.

4. *nadhara iliahe behteker* meaning: “He looked at him contemptuously.”

(i) He saw him in contempt glance.

(ii) He looked at him with disdain.

5. *nazala min aineh* meaning: “He lost his respect for him.”

(i) He falls down of my eyes.

(ii) His values fell from my eyes.

Long sentences

1-*maktab al shahn wa tafrigh moghlak fi ?ayam aljom?*

(i) The office of consignment and emptiness is closed on Fridays.

2-*astlama intharan shaded allahga besabab ghiyabeh amotakerer*

(ii) He received a strong dialect notice regarding to his repeated absence.

3-*assera? alkabali khateroon ala estikrar almokata?*

(iii) The tribal fight (struggle is dangerous to the stability of the country.

4-*elegat hassan wa hussein aktanafha alghomodh*

(iv) The ambiguity (obscurity, vagueness, mistry) covered (encycled, surrounded) Hassan and Hussein’s relationship.

ESL/EFL STUDENTS' INCOMPETENCE IN COLLOCATIONS USAGE

"Bringing a discourse dimension into language teaching does not by any means imply an abandonment of teaching vocabulary. Vocabulary will still be the largest single element in tackling a new language for the learner and it would be irresponsible to suggest that it will take care of itself in some ideal world where language teaching and learning are discourse driven."

(McCarthy, 1991:64)

"Strategies which learners can use independently of a teacher are the most important of all ways of learning vocabulary. For this reason it is worthwhile ensuring that learners are able to apply the strategies and that they get plenty of help and encouragement in doing so. By mastering a few strategies learners can cope with thousands of words."

(Nation, 1990:174)

⁴ Published in Thamar University Journal for Studies and Researches, No.5-March 2007, Yemen.

ABSTRACT

English fourth level students encounter misunderstanding collocations. Two tests, which were administered to the learners, reveal that both the girls and the boys are unaware of the correct use of the English common collocations. This indicates that they may have not been exposed to multifarious useful exercises in collocations.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of collocations is a frequent combination of words. Collocations with very similar meanings occur with great frequency (Cook, 2003). English learners often find phrasal verbs unfamiliar, complicated and difficult. But native speaker have no difficulty with them. They actually prefer phrasal verbs to single-word verbs (Bowen Donald J. et al 1985). Collocations form semantic and structure bonds which become routines and chunks which the L1 speakers can comprehend and produce easily (Celce- Murcia et al 2000). However, they state that the native speakers misuse collocations e.g. they say and write tall building rather than high building or significant rather than statistically important. The nonnative English speakers, cannot benefit of word combinations because of interference from their mother tongue and/or because of lack of exposure and attention to permanent use of L2. Rutherford, William E. (1987) adds that collocations cause a main lexical confusing which the L2 learners always encounter. He says also that collocations present an important challenge to English learners at all English levels. Collocations and its subtleties should be learnt and one who fails to obtain the English collocations right indicates that s/he is a foreign English learner in e.g. talking about rotten rather than rancid egg (McArthur, T. 1998). Collocations word combinations e.g. make bitter disappointment or make a decision as a vital factor of the native speaker competency and thus they must be included in ESL/EFL teaching which is widely acknowledged today. Collocations are not only important for learners who work hard for getting high degree of competency, but also

for learners with less ambitious aspirations. Besides collocations acquaintance helps learners speak accurately and fluently. Collocations are two or more words which combine with other required words collocations specifically with e.g. a noun adverb and/or a noun verb (Nesselhauf, Nadja, 2003). Collocations are considered a major lexicon of language. Thus, they generally cause problems to learners of second and/or foreign language. Well acquainted collocations usually enable learners to use words properly (Stockdale, Joseph G. 2004). However, collocations use, acquisition and ultimate success are extremely very vital. Therefore, upon teaching vocabulary one tenth of the class period should be spent on definition and the rest should be spent on collocations and their use (Stockdale, Joseph G. 2004). Woolard George (2000) states that a typical definition of collocational words is statistically much more probably to appear together than random chance suggests. He adds that he has specified the used terms of collocations to the useful relations between nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs which serve two purposes; (i) provide a very clear definition of collocations for learners and (ii) avoid overlap with traditional vocabulary exercises e.g. dependent preposition. He believes that learners must be equipped with skills to enable them to evolve their collocational knowledge outside classes. More apparently Woolard believes that Business English and EAP courses should mainly contain collocations. Swan Morgan (2000) agrees with Woolard G. and says that collocations must be deliberately chosen and integrated into language learning materials input. J. R. Firth (cited in Hill, Jimmie (2000)) states that collocations are words which move together and keep their relations with other words. Hill (2000) however, says that collocations are words which are based on predictable combinations. Hill also adds another definition of collocation and states that all collocations are idioms whereas all phrasal verbs and idioms are collocations. Collocations are important key to fluency. In fact they help us to think quickly and communicate properly. Idioms are based on the meaning of the whole whereas collocation takes care of likely words combinations (Lewis, 2000). Lewis also adds that collocational words co-occur naturally and significantly in texts. Collocation is words naturally co-occurring in what David Brazil brilliantly named “used language”. Collocations are words which are “put together”. They occur naturally. It is more difficult to combine words to form collocates. In addition, Lewis

divides collocations up into two groups; (i) Lexical collocations, e.g. give me an evasive answer and (ii) Grammatical collocations, e.g. a war of, step into. In other words, lexical collocations unify two equal lexical elements (open class words), whereas the grammatical collocations unify a lexical word typically a noun, verb or adjective with a grammatical word (one open class word and one closed word). Further, phrasal verbs are grammatical collocations. And there are phrases e.g. put the meeting off until ----- which include both lexical words and grammatical words which are often used together. Because of collocation competency which the L2 learners must be acquainted with in spoken and written skills, Ter-Minasova, S. (cited in Lewis, 2000, P. 134) States that upon learning collocations, L2 teachers should follow this:

foreign learners must keep in that they should learn words not through translations of their meaning (that is, reference to bits of reality and concepts) but in their most natural, habitual contexts, typical of the target language.

Hattem and Mason (1994) affirm that collocation is one of the lexical cohesion devices and it provides powerful evidence of intentionality and text-type focus. Halliday and Hasan (1976) add that collocation is a combination of any two lexical items which can create a cohesive force in case they are used in adjacent sentences. Hattem and Mason clearly state that understanding collocations in any context can be indicators towards the desirable meaning. Neglecting to get the English collocation correct is a basic indicator of foreignness, e.g. using rotten butter rather than rancid butter. Idioms move together to form new meanings regardless of the meaning of their elements, e.g. It rains cats and dogs (McArthur, T. 1998). Collocations are words which always occur with other words. Collocations are frequent combination of words (Cobuild Dictionary, new Edition, 2004). Bowen J. Donald et al (1985) say that collocations are words which move together in terms of similarity, e.g., common roots, derivations, affixations. They are grouped in terms of semantic or functional relations. Collocations are words which move semantic and structural relations which the native speakers can get comprehension or production. Collocation is some words which are often used together, 'commit a crime' is a typical example of collocations in English (Celce-Murcia et al 2000).

Moreover, Crystal D. (1978) says that the collocation term is the habitual co-occurrence of individual lexical items, e.g. auspicious collocates with occasion, event, sign etc. He adds that collocations, collocated lexical items are said to be collocates of each other. The possibility of words to collocate is known as their collocability or collocational range. Harmer (1998) states that most collocations go and live together, e.g., the words complete, total, alter, co-occur with the word 'disaster' but the words 'full' and 'whole' do not work with 'disaster'. Also the words like 'common/good sense', 'making the bed', 'harmful/damaging effects', doing the housework go together while the words 'bad sense', 'making the housework', bad effects never go together etc. Collocation is the combination of two or more words which often go together. The adjectives 'broad and wide' have nearly the same meaning but combine with very different collocates, e.g. broad accent, broad agreement, broad daylight, broad grin, broad shoulders, etc; wide appeal, wide area, wide experience, wide interests, wide margin, etc (Biber, Douglas et al 2002). Gairns, R. and Redman S. (1991) say that collocation is two items which are frequently combined. Although the collocations have no rules, Gairns and Redman (1991, p. 37) try to classify the most common types of them as follows:

- (i) subject noun + verb, e.g. The earth revolves around the sun;
- (ii) verb + object noun, e.g. She bites her nails;
- (iii) adjective + noun, e.g. aloud noise, heavy traffic and
- (iv) adverb + past participle used adjectively e.g. badly dressed, fully insured.

However, Hill (2000, p. 51) claims that collocations can have two or more words and contain these categories:

- (i) adjective + noun (a huge profit);
- (ii) noun + noun (a pocket calculator);
- (iii) verb + adjective + noun (speak different languages);
- (iv) verb + adverb (run quickly);
- (v) adverb + verb (half understand);
- (vi) adverb + adjective (completely done) and
- (vii) verb + preposition + noun (play in the garden).

Furthermore, some collocations contain adverb + subject + verb + adjective + noun + preposition + noun for instance, Unfortunately it affects the social situation in the countryside. Additionally Lewis (2000, p. 63-64) presents other categories below for collocations:

- (i) strength: a large number of collocation are strong, e.g. She most commonly talks of rancid eggs;
- (ii) median Strength: strong collocations combine with a greater frequency than weak ones, e.g. He carries out his duty and
- (iii) weakness: some words go together with a greater frequency than random. Many contrastive things are, e.g. long/short, cheap/expensive, good/bad and some predictable things are, e.g. white coffee and black coffee. All in all, overall the points mentioned-above collocations either lexical or grammatical ones are subject to syntactic and semantic rules.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

It is possibly that English collocations have not been subjected to investigations. It can be said that a few studies have been performed on English collocations. It is hoped that this study will (i) provide a basis and stimulus for more researches in language competences and some related important subjects such as collocations and (ii) make use of the theoretical and methodological producers performed in different parts of the world to examine the fourth level students of the Department of English, faculty of education and the fourth level students of the Department of English literature, Thamar University, Yemen.

METHODOLOGY

1. Subjects

The subjects were one hundred thirty one students; ten females and twenty six males totally are thirty six, the fourth level students of the Department of English Literature, Faculty of Arts, Thamar University and ninety five (fifty females and forty five males) fourth level students of the Department of English Language, Faculty of Education, Thamar

University as well. Mostly they were between twenty and twenty five years old. They have been learning English since they were thirteen years old. The language that they speak is Arabic.

2. Instruments

The test is divided into two parts; part (1) centers on twelve items of three multiple-choice, and part (2) has fifteen items of matching which center on the lexical collocations and grammatical collocations too. They are in total twenty seven items. The test was administered to the control group which was randomly chosen at 11:00 am on January 1st, 2006. The control group was ten of the fourth level students, the Department of English Language, Faculty of Education, Tamar University. The test took exactly half an hour. The statistical methods that will be used to analyse the test results are t-test and the one-way Anova test (Analysis of Variance).

2.1 Test Reliability

The Kuder-Richardson KR 20 formula was applied to calculate the reliability of the test which was administered to the randomly selective control group of ten fourth level students, the Department of English Language, Faculty of Education, Tamar University. The reliability of the test is 99 percent. Accordingly, the test is reliable.

2.2 Validity

Validity was calculated by the square root of the test reliability. Since the test reliability of this study is 99 percent, the intrinsic validity coefficient is 99.50 percent. Therefore, the test of this study is good and reliable.

3. Procedure

The test was administered to the female and male subjects (as a midterm test) who were the fourth level students of two Departments, the Department of English Literature, Faculty of Arts, Tamar University and the Department of English Language, Faculty of Education, Tamar

University too, at 11:00 am, on January 15th 2006 after they had finished their classes.

4. The Scope of the Study

The aim of this study is to first investigate the subjects' competence in the use of English collocations and second let English nonnative teachers and English curriculum designers and writers pay close attention to the English collocations because the lexical and grammatical collocations represent important schooling challenges to the foreign learners of the English language.

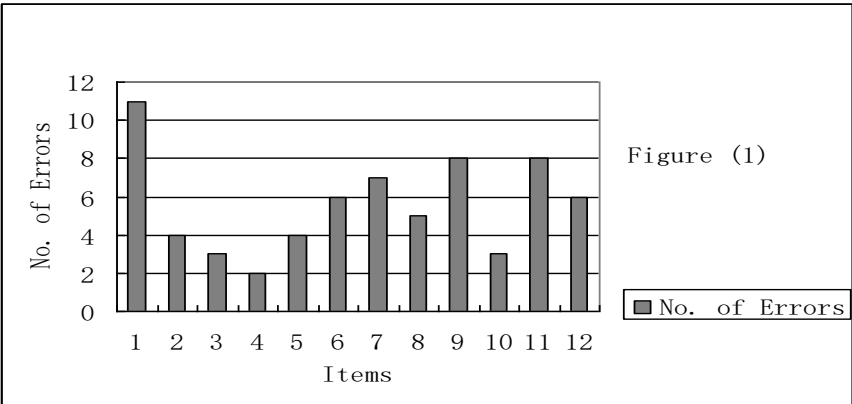
DATA ANALYSIS

In the multiple-choice part of test, the errors that the female and male subjects performed are 67 out of 132 errors. That is 50.76 percent whereas the correct answers they did are 65 out of 132 items that is 49.24 percent. Table (33) and Figure (2) below present clearly what the subjects did in the multiple-choice test. The highest percentages that the subjects achieved in part (1) are 16.42% item (1), 11.94% item (8), 11.94% item (11) respectively and the lowest percentages which they got in items (4) and (10) are 2.99%, 4.48% respectively. This indicates that the subjects are somewhat acquainted with the grammatical collocations of which the three-multiple-choice test consists.

Table (33): Description of frequent errors and their percentages in test (1)

Test Items	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
No. of Errors	11	4	3	2	4	6	7	5	8	3	8	6	67
Percentage	16.42	5.97	4.48	2.99	5.97	8.96	10.45	7.46	11.94	4.48	11.94	8.96	100.00

Figure (2) Description of errors frequency in test (1)



However the errors that the subjects yielded in the matching part of the test are 128 out of 165 errors, that is 77.58 percent, but the correct answers which they produced in this test are 37 out of 165, that is 22.42 percent. The lowest percentage of errors that the subjects accomplished in the matching part, is 1.56 percent item (1) while the highest percentages that they made in this part are 7.81 percent item (2), 7.81 percent item(4), 7.81 percent item (11), 7.81 percent item (14) respectively. Table (34) and Figure (3) apparently show in detail the errors which the subjects did in particular with the following items of the lexical collocations and the grammatical collocations as well:

easily	Disappointed
Poorly	Led
bitterly	Qualified
Densely (sparsely)	Paid
to fish for	Your chest
to give someone	the benefit money

to get something off

Complement

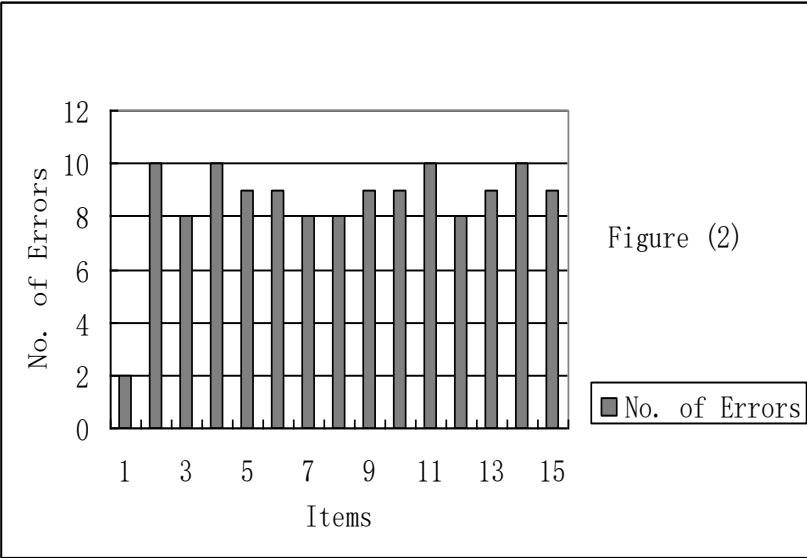
In-vest

the doubt

Table (34): Description of frequent errors and their percentages in test (2)

Test Items	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Total
No. of Errors	2	10	8	10	9	9	8	8	9	9	10	8	9	10	9	128
Percentage	1.56	7.81	6.25	7.81	7.03	7.03	6.25	6.25	7.03	7.03	7.81	6.25	7.03	7.81	7.03	100.00

Figure (3) Description of errors frequency in test (2)



According to their English level it has not been expected that the subjects have got extremely confused in performing the matching test. They are actually not aware of using collocations. From the errors which were performed on the test; the multiple-choice and matching parts, it may be inferred that the female and male subjects have never been exposed to applied exercises on collocations at all. They definitely lack knowledge of English collocations usage.

Furthermore, it has been noticed that the female and male subjects' performance on part (1) is an average that is 50.76 percent. However, their performance on part (2) is below the average that is 22.48 percent. This indicates that the subjects' knowledge in the usage of collocations is significantly very low. The statistical measures such as means (6.35, 3.65), Variances (0.14, 0.79), standard deviations (0.35, 0.89), standard error of differences (0.17, 0.39), and the t-test values (8.48, 3.02) in Tables (35-a, 36-a) and the F values (42.7, 9.08) in Tables (35-b, 36-b), accept the research's null hypothesis and state more clearly that the female and male subjects' achievement in the multiple-choice test and the matching test is unsatisfactory. These statistical measures emphasise that what the subjects, females and males have done in the two parts is extremely very poor in the lexical and grammatical collocations.

Table (35-a): **Description of the t-test of the education and arts male subjects**

Test done by boys	Mean	Variance	SD	s\bar{D}	d.f.	t-test
	6.35	0.14	0.374	0.167	4	8.48

*P<0.01

Table (35-b): Description of the F value of the education and arts male subjects

Source of Variance	SS	d.f.	MS	F
Between groups	119.55	4	29.89	42.7*
Within groups	5.63	8	0.70	
Total	125.18	12		

* P<0.01

Table (36-a): Description of the t-test of the education and arts female subjects

Test done by girls	Mean	Variance	SD	SD	d.f.	t-test
	3.65	0.793	0.891	0.389	4	3.02

*P<0.01

Table (36-b): Description of the F value of the education and arts female subjects

Source of Variance	SS	d.f.	MS	F
Between groups	22.50	4	5.63	9.08*
Within groups	4.99	8	0.62	
Total	27.49	12		

* P<0.01

Nevertheless, with respect to the results of the matching and multiple-choice tests which were achieved by the female and male

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subjects, it has been inferred that the female subjects have performed much better than the male subjects. In Table (37-a) and Table (37-b) the statistical measures of differences Mean (2.7), Variance (0.653), Standard Deviation (0.517), Standard Errors of Difference (0.231), the t-test value (5.96) and the F Value (26.9) accept the researcher's hypothesis stating that there is no deference among the female and male subjects and additionally indicate that the female and male subjects are to some extent aware of the English collocations' usage.

Table (37-a): Description of the t-test of the education and arts female and male subjects

Difference of two tests	Mean	Variance	SD	s₅	d.f.	t-test
	2.7	0.653	0.517	0.231	4	5.96

P* <0.01

Table (37-b): Description of the F value of the education and arts female and male subjects

Source of Variance	SS	d.f.	MS	F
Between groups	142.05	8	17.76	26.9
Within groups	10.62	16	0.66	
Total	152.67	24		

* P<0.01

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

Regarding the results of the two parts of the test, what subjects have done is not acceptable particularly in matching part. The errors that the female and male subjects have produced in the two parts of the test are in total 185 out of 287 errors, that is 69.29 percent. In addition, some items in part (1) have been left without any answers. For instance item (4) in part (1) has been answered only by two subjects. Another example, item (1) in part (2) has been answered only by two subjects as well. In Table (33) and Table (34) the number of errors and their percentages present the subjects' incompetence in collocations. Also the t-test value (15.96) in Table (37-a) and the F Value (26.9) in Table (37-b) and other statistical measures reject the null hypothesis saying that there is no difference between the results of the two parts of the test. They in fact stress that (1) the female subjects have done much better than the male subjects, but what they have achieved in the two parts of the test in general is unsatisfactory. And second, what the female and male subjects have accomplished in the multiple-choice part and the matching part is extremely very poor. In other words, all the statistical measures such as the t-test and the F value state that the female and male subjects have no knowledge of the collocations use. Or they have never ever been subjected to applied exercises on collocations use.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher strongly recommends that the students who want to join the two Departments, the Department of English Literature, Faculty of Arts, Tamar University and the Department of English Language, Faculty of Education, Tamar University should:

- i. undergo to admission test and interview which will be prepared by the English Departments staff;
- ii. have personal desire and motivation to learn English;
- iii. be taught by well qualified professors who are specialists in English Literature and Applied Linguistics.

Besides Tamar University should:

- i. prepare Halls for English classes;
- ii. supply the two Departments of English and English literature with English laboratory which will help students practise listening and speaking skills;
- iii. supply the two Departments with very good library containing new English materials which will assist both professors and learners to perform their academic work perfectly;
- iv. limit the number of the students in each class between 40-50 students;
- v. involve the students to attend their classes at least 75%; and
- vi. involve the two Departments, Department of English Language, Faculty of Education, Tamar University and the Department of English Literature, Faculty of Arts, Tamar University as well as admit the full-time students.

Additionally on teaching collocations, Lewis (2000) states that (i): Teachers should pay close attention to pronunciation, intonation, stress and grammar. Learners must be aware of learning collocations; (ii): They should know that they should be able to use collocations properly and effectively because using collocations is a crucial stage in learning; (iii): Teachers should teach students that some words are used in every limited number of collocations on teaching new individual words; (iv): Teachers have to teach their students most common collocations, e.g. go in the car ferry, take the ferry from Taiz to Sana'a; (v): The students must know how to use words meaning knowing something about their collocational fields at higher levels. Students need a huge injection of lexis in general and collocational competence in particular which help them to read more widely, understand more quickly and speak more fluently; (vi): Course-books and ministry syllabuses for post-elementary learners should contain lexical and collocational inputs because they represent an important stage in learning; and (vii): Teachers should direct the student's attention for instance to the exercises below through which they can learn the most common useful collocations. To improve the learners' understanding collocations the following strategies are recommended.

1. correcting common mistakes

Have the students look up the word in bold in an English dictionary, e.g. Cobuild Dictionary. For example:

He is completely **disappointed** when failing in his exam.

2. verb + adverb

Use each adverb once to complete these sentences: confidently,
completely, hardly, strongly. For example:

Some verbs ----- collocate with particular adverbs.

3. Alternatives to very

Use stronger and more precise words which have the same meaning
of e.g. very. For example: highly, bitterly

----- qualified ----- disappointed

4. verb + adverb phrase

Fill in the blanks with suitable verbs. For examples:

spread, ripe

When the news got out, it like ----- wildfire.

I hope I will live to ----- old age.

5. Adverb + adjective

Match each adverb in list **1** with an adjective in list **2**

To find the answers you should look up the words, adjectives in an
English dictionary, e.g. Cobuild Dictionary.

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1. enthusiastically | a. qualified |
| 2. highly | b. received |
| 3. battery | c. disappointed |
| 4. widely | d. damaged |
| 5. densely | e. populated areas |

6. Synonyms

Give the similar meaning to these words in bold. For examples:

- (i) Rourours are **rife** or -----.
- (ii) News can **slip out** or ----- out.

7. Opposites

Give the opposites in meaning to these words in bold. For examples:

- (i) You can **dismiss** or ----- employees.
- (ii) You can **impose** or ----- an embargo on a country.

8. The missing verb

Find the missing verbs. For examples:

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| (i) ----- a mistake | (ii) ----- danger |
| ----- a statement | ----- an accident |
| ----- a conversation | ----- a questions |

9. Interesting adjectives-1

Complete the sentences using each of these adjectives once. For example:

bitter, inspired, wide

- (i) It is a ----- disappointment.
- (ii) Holiday in Iceland is an ----- choice.

10. Interesting adjective-2

Some adjectives cannot be used all the time.

e.g. big house / problem: Add one or more adjective to each of these nouns. For examples:

completely / great, strong, special, serious

- (i) ----- accident (ii) ----- compliant
(iii) ----- career (iv) ----- advantage

11. Odd verb out

Cross out the verb which does not fit or collocate with the nouns. For examples:

Nouns

- (i) comp up with, do, expect, get, require, supply Answer
(ii) deal with, do, examine, ignore, reject, respond to A
complaint

12. Words in groups

Match each of these nouns to one of the groups of verbs. For examples:

dispute, war, attack, straggle

Group A: declare, go to, lead to, prolong, wage, win

Group B: be engaged in, continue, face, give up, join, take up

13. Sentence + adverbs

Put the sentence adverbs below into the following sentences.

in theory, in practice, in fairness

- (i) It's a good idea ----- but it will never work -----

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According to the important requirements mentioned-above, and if they were carried out properly, the researcher believes the output of the two Departments, Department of English Literature, Faculty of Arts and the Department of English Language, Faculty of Education, Thamar University would be completely different, completely remarkable.

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APPENDIX

Name: -----

Date: / /

Level:-----

Time: ½ Hrs

Part (1) of the test

1-Select the suitable words to fill in the blanks below:

1-We are very keenYemeni food.

a) with

b)in

c)on

2-When mother is angry, she shoutsme.

a) to

b)at

c)with

3-She is tiredplaying football.

a)of

b)from

c)in

4-Tourists are interestedYemeni antique buildings.

a) of

b) for

c)in

5-She apologizesthe mistakes she had done.

- a) from b)of c)for

6-He has got a

- a) off-hand b)hangover c)red-headed

7-In accidents, people are ofteninjured.

- a)bad b)very bad c)badly

8-Please.....the car quickly.

- a)get on b)get to c)get in

9-Let us go home early before thehour.

- a)heavy b)crowded c)rush

10-They are awarethe problem.

- a)with b)of c)in

11-Can I paythe cheque?

- a)with b)for c)by

12-Jill is excepting her second

- a)boy b)girl c)child

Name: -----

Date: / /

Level:-----

Time: ½ Hrs

Part (2) of the test

2-Match the words from the first column with those from the second

1- invite

vigorously

2- forbid

cordially

3- protest

Highly

4- recommend

categorically

5- apologize

sincerely

6- easily

Disappointed

7- poorly

Led

8- bitterly

Qualified

9- densely (sparsely)

Paid

10- highly

Populated

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------|
| 11- to fish for | your chest |
| 12- to give someone the benefit of | money |
| 13- to get something off | compliments |
| 14- to invest | a report |
| 15- to file | the doubt |
-

⁵FINDING THE SEMANTICS OF THE ENGLISH PRESENT TENSES AMBIGUOUS

"A discourse-oriented approach to grammar would suggest not only a greater emphasis on contexts larger than the sentence, but also a reassessment of priorities in terms of what is taught about such things as word order, articles, ellipsis, tense and aspect, and some of the other categories."

"...grammar is seen to have a direct role in welding clauses, turns and sentences into discourse..."

(McCarthy, 1991:62)

⁵ Presented at 39th IATEFL Conference, April 5-9, 2005, Cardiff, UK. Published in Thamar University Journal for Studies and Researches, No.1-February/2005, Yemen

ABSTRACT

The fourth level students of the Department of English Language, Thamar University, who will be teachers in preparatory and secondary schools are confused in the use of the English present verb forms and their meanings. In other words, the subjects show competence in the use of the English present verb forms whereas they get confused in the use of the semantics of the English present tenses. Weinreich (1972) emphasizes the fact that “English tense creates vague meanings.” The present experimental study conducted in 2001-2002 endeavors to investigate the subjects’ confusion in the use of the semantics of the English present tenses through two tests; the first test centers on the English present verb forms and the second on the semantics of the English present tenses. These two tests were administered to the fourth level students of the Department of English, Thamar University. The results obtained state that the significance test is $p > 0.001$ indicating that the subjects reveal a semantic problem with the English present tenses (simple present, present continuous and present perfect) which exhibit various aspects.

INTRODUCTION

The fourth level students of the Department of English, Tamar University face vagueness up on the use of the English present tenses and their semantics. Close (1958) argues that the use of English tense semantically confuses learners of English as a second or foreign language. Weinreich (1972) affirms that English tense creates vague meanings, e.g. (1) *Playing football is interesting.* (2) *She studies the whole term.* The ambiguity in each sentence is created by the transformational rules yielding some surface results from various deep structures and from the words probably operating in double syntactic abilities, e.g. *play* is both an intransitive and a transitive verb, for example, (3) *The boy is playing.* (4) *He is playing football.* Culicover (1976) adds that English verbs, which probably take part in verbal sequences, have different forms with different meanings e.g. *be*: (5) *He is being noisy.* (6) *He is noisy.* ; *do*: (7) *He does his work well.* (8) *She does play the guitar.* ; *have*: (9) *He has many things to do.* (10) *He has written good stories.* ; and *write*: (11) *His writing is good.* (12) *He is writing a letter.* Harmer (1998) adds that different scholars at different times have worked hard for many years to describe the present perfect tense. Bache (1985) agrees with other scholars such as Close and says that not only are foreign learners of English confused in the use of English tense but also six generations of scholars have been puzzled by multifarious uses of the simple and progressive forms and this is normally reflected in the description of the relationship between the forms and meanings of the system. However, he adds that the semantic use of the English tense which troubles so much the foreign students, does not bother the native speaker at all. The native speaker can immediately use one tense form describing her/his meaning efficiently because s/he has acquired the use of that form from her/his social environment. Close also says that in English grammar “time” might be considered as the present till it is changed to the past or the future. He further claims that the present tenses are present perfect, present simple and present progressive. The present progressive indicates that an act is performed at the moment of speaking, e.g., (13) *They are speaking now* and the present simple indicates that an

act is done habitually, e.g. (14) *She speaks Arabic fluently*. Nevertheless, some verbs are not used in the progressive they are only used in the present simple, e.g. (15) *Now you hear what he says*.

Moreover, since the English tense is confusing, Long (1988, 1991) suggests two ways which may help students learn English as a second or foreign language. They are classified into two phases: *Focus on form* and *focus on meaning*. The first phase is based on the traditional method of teaching distinctive grammatical categories. The second phase encourages the student to pay attention to linguistic elements which help to concentrate on meaning or communication. Norris and Ortega (2000: 209,438) agree with Long (1991) and state that “focus on form” should meet these four criteria (i) designing tasks to promote the learner engagement with meaning prior to form; (ii) seeking to attain and document task essentiality or naturalness of the L2 forms. (iii) seeking to ensure that instruction was unobtrusive; (iv) documenting the learner’s mental process ‘noticing’”. Norris and Ortega’s study emphasizes first on form and next on exercises through which learners can distinguish form-meaning relationships. Dickens and Woods (1988) say that the use of either the present perfect simple or the present perfect continuous depends on factors, the context of which always meaningfully presents the sentence with certain type of discoursal form; the speaker’s attitude that describes what s/he is stating. For example,

- (16) *I have lived in Yemen for 20 years (non-progressive sentence),*
(17) *I have been living in Yemen for 20 years (progressive sentence).*

Here the use of the progressive and non-progressive forms are probably based on the speaker’s attitude related to the period that s/he has spent in Yemen. Therefore, the grammatical rule is able to describe the use of forms semantically and test them practically. Other scholars like King (1983), Comrie (1976) and Quirk et al. (1973) attempt to explain the simple present perfect and present perfect continuous and say that these two tenses have different meanings, e.g.

- (18) *Who has eaten my chocolate? (Perfect)*
(19) *Who has been eating my chocolate? (Continuous)*

In the first example, the whole chocolate has been eaten whereas in the next one, a piece has been left. The result of these two tenses is that the tense in the first sentence is perfective whereas in the second one is continuous or imperfective.

Comrie (1976) further attempts to express some events in the present perfect tense form and classify them as follows:

(i) Perfect of result: This perfect is used to manifest clearly the present relevance of a previous event, e.g. (20) *Ali has come*, refers to the result of Ali's coming. (ii) Experiential perfect: This type of perfect explains an event held once in the past and continued up to the present, e.g. (21) *She has been to Egypt since 2000*, indicates the present relevance of the result. (iii) Perfect of persistent situation: This type of perfect describes an event or action starting in the past and extending into present, e.g. (22) *They have been waiting since 9:00*. This kind of perfect mentioned above explains the present relevance never conveying recentness which is probably a sufficient condition for present relevance, e.g. (23) *They have just left*. However, concerning the simple present tense Bache (1985), Comrie (1976), King (1983) and Quirk et al. (1973) claim that the simple present tense can describe not only the present meaning but also the habitual meaning, e.g. (24) *He goes to school.*, the timeless meaning, e.g. (25) *The moon goes around the earth* and the future meaning used with conditional temporal clauses and planned events, e.g.

(26) *The plane leaves at 6:30 tomorrow morning.*

(27) *I will call him before I visit him.*

(28) *If she finds them, she will be happy.*

In connection with the present progressive planned in the present and used with dynamic transitional verbs, e.g. *arrive, come, go*, refer to the future, e.g. (29) *He is leaving for Cairo at 8 O'clock tomorrow morning.* (30) *Jill and Hamed are getting married in the next month.* King (1983) endeavors to explain the present progressive and says that the present progressive form is semantically imperfective, that is, the structural view of event lies in the middle whereas the non-progressive

form is semantically perfective, that is, the situation viewed is entirely complete. It has been noted that an aspect and tense do occasionally affect each other. The present tense is applied to explain actions going on at the present moment, either progressive or habitual which are imperfective, e.g. with habitual meaning, (31) *He works hard* and with progressive meaning, (32) *He is working hard* (Comrie 1983). Eventually, Comrie uses two grammatical terms related to the progressive present called telic and atelic events and says that the telic situations have a terminal point and it is perfective, e.g. (33) *He is writing a story*. (34) *He is writing three stories*. whereas the atelic situation has no terminal point and it is imperfective, e.g. (35) *He is writing*. (36) *He is writing stories*.

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

The subjects of this study were the fourth level students of the Department of English Language, Faculty of Education, Tamar University. They were 115 students; 50 females and 60 males. They were nearly 25 years old. Their native language is Arabic.

Instruments

Two tests were prepared to examine meaningfully the subjects' perception and knowledge of the English present tenses. The first test examines the different verb-forms of the English present tenses and the second one which has twelve items tests the different semantics aspects of the English present tenses.

The purpose of test (1) is to confirm that the students are fully aware of the grammatical rules. If a student is asked to give a sentence, e.g., in the present perfect tense, s/he will definitely say it or write it completely right. However the purpose of test (2) is also to confirm that although the subjects have known the syntactic rules properly, they are unable to use them well especially when facing conversations in different social situations and activities.

They are almost always extremely confused in the use of the English present tenses in the written and/or spoken English. Therefore, the errors the subjects made in test (2) are greatly huge in number.

The control group was the fourth level students of the Department of English literature, Faculty of Arts, the University of Tamar and the control group was the fourth level students of the Department of English Language, Faculty of Education, the same University. The control group was used to specify the test time and tests reliability.

Test Time

The two tests were administered to the CG subjects in April, 2002. Accordingly, the two tests took half an hour which the EG subjects would be required to carry out when performing them.

Test Reliability

The Kuder Richardson 21 formula was used to calculate the reliability of test (1) and test (2). The reliability of the two tests is 70% and 80% respectively. Then the two tests are good and reliable.

Procedure

The two tests were presented to the sample in the Department of English language after they had finished their classes. The two tests having 20 items in total were administered to the sample in the academic year 2001-2002 between March and April.

Aims

The objective of this experimental study is to examine meaningfully the subjects' perception and knowledge of the English present tenses. In other words, this study intends to test if the subjects know the relationship between the English present tenses-forms and their meanings. Also the findings of this study will probably guide Yemeni English Teachers at public and private educational levels of middle and high schools and universities to teach their students to use grammar probably.

DATA ANALYSIS

In test (1) and test (2), the subjects were required to select the correct alternative out of the four given choices, i.e. (a), (b), (c), and (d) out of which gives the exact meaning of the head sentence. Test (1) in Table (38) has eight items. Test (2) in Table (39) has 12 items. It is classified into two groups. The first group (1-7) deals with the simple present and the present continuous form explaining the usual and future functions and the present continuous form that describes the current and future functions. The next group (8-12) tests the present perfect form. The correction and the errors analysis are based on the answers key.

Table (38): Explanation of frequent errors on each item of test (1) and their percentages

No. of Items	No. of Errors	Percentages
1	12	19.05
2	7	11.11
3	5	7.93
4	9	14.29
5	7	11.11
6	9	14.29
7	9	14.29
8	5	7.93
Total	63	100%

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In test (1), the subjects did very well. The errors they produced on this test are extremely low in number. The total number of errors is only 63 that is, 7.35% while the number of the right answers is 857 (93.5%). This means that the subjects may have good knowledge of the English verb-forms.

However, in test (2) the subjects were confused in choosing the correct answers. They actually could not distinguish the different semantic aspects of the English present tenses. Therefore, they produced a huge number of errors. The use of the English tense meaningfully confuses learners of English as a second or foreign language (Close 1958). Table (39) below presents the errors the subjects committed on each item in test (2).

Table (39): Explanation of frequent errors on each item of test (2) and their percentage

No. of Items	No. of Errors	Percentages
1	67	6.79
2	60	6.08
3	58	5.88
4	95	9.62
5	105	10.64
6	70	7.09
7	85	8.61
8	84	8.51
9	101	10.23
10	76	7.70
11	91	9.22
12	95	9.63
Total	987	100%

Table (39) shows us that the subjects have yielded a large number of errors, that is to say, the errors they produced in total on test (2) are 987 (71.52%) while the right answers are 393 (28.48%). Also Table (39) presents respectively the errors the subjects made in test (2). With items (1-7) most subjects selected the incorrect answers. For instance, the subjects chose 1-a *The baby is always noisy*.

- 1-The baby is being noisy.
- The baby is always noisy.
 - The baby is noisy.
 - The baby is noisy right now.
 - The baby has been noisy.

They should have chosen 1-c *The baby is noisy right now*, which agrees with the meaning of the head sentence. The errors the students produced on this item are 67 (6.79%). On item (3) the subjects chose the wrong alternative 3-d *She will be playing football on Monday afternoon* that never gives the correct meaning of the head sentence. They had to select 3-c *She is going to play football on Monday afternoon* which gives the meaning of the head sentence. In sentence (4) also the right choice is 4-c *The flight 85 is arriving in Sana'a at noon* which contents to the meaning of the head sentence but the subjects chose the incorrect one, i.e. 4-a *The flight 85 will arrive in Sana'a at noon* The number of errors produced on this item is 95 that is, (9.62%). On items (1-7), the errors committed are 540 that is, (54.71%) out of 987 errors which were made on the other items. Culicover (1976) argues that the English verbs while taking part in verbal sequences have different forms with different meanings. This big number of errors produced on items (1-7) is attributed to the subjects' ignorance of the real meaning of the English present tenses; simple present and present continuous or it is due to the overgeneralization and/or lack of practising speaking English.

Concerning items (8-12) examining the present perfect tense, the subjects were required to choose the correct alternatives which have the same meaning of the head sentences. What the subjects did on items (1-7) was reproduced on items (8-12). For instance, the wrong item 7-a *The journalist was killed* was chosen instead of the correct one, 7-c *The*

journalist is dead. The item 5-a *The moon is going round the earth* was also preferred instead of the acceptable answer, 5-b *The moon has been going around the earth and will be continuing doing so* which agrees with the meaning of the head sentence. The errors committed on this item are 105 (10.64%) out of 987 errors conducted on the other items. With item (8) the subjects had to choose 8-c *She knows India well* as it conveys the same meaning as the meaning of the head sentence, but they chose the wrong one, 8-d *She has been in India for a long time.* The errors yielded on item 8 are 84(8.51%). As for item (9) they selected 9-a *He cannot get scarlet fever*, although the right answer is 9-b *He can still get the scarlet fever* having the meaning of the head sentence. The errors made on this item are 101 that is, (10.23%). Regarding items (11-12), in sentence (11) they had to select 11-a *The book is read*, however, they preferred the unacceptable answer 11-d *The book had been read* which does not consent to the meaning of the head sentence. In sentence (12) the subjects should have selected 12-a *He has to stay at home because his leg is broken*, instead they chose the wrong one, 12-b *He is forced to be at home because he has a healthy problem.*

In fact, all the errors produced on items (8-12) are much higher than those made on the other items in test (2). The real number of the errors committed on these items (8-12) is 447 that is, (45.29%) out of 987 errors which were produced on the other items of test (2). Not only are the foreign learners of English confused in English tense but also six generations of scholars have been puzzled by multifarious uses of the sample and progressive forms (Bache 1985). This huge number of the errors is due to the lack of the subjects' knowledge of the present perfect tense. Also it may be attributed to the subjects' carelessness when performing the test and/or the non-English speaking environment never assisting them to remember the grammatical rules and speak English properly.

All the errors that were produced on all the items (1-12) of test (2) are attributed to the lack of the subjects' perception and/or knowledge of the different semantic aspects of the English present tenses. According to Weinreich (1972), the English verb creates vague meanings. Further, it

is probably due to the environment in which the subjects cannot find people to speak English with and help them to remember the grammatical rules and practise speaking the language properly. Dulay et al. (1982) add that a natural language environment plays an extremely important role in developing communication skills.

It is clear that the two tests have displayed a very significant difference. In fact, the subjects have done very well on the first test while on the second they have not. Table (38) tells us that the subjects have done well on test (1). This means that the students know well the English verb-forms. However, Table (39) informs us that the subjects have produced a lot of errors on test (2) which are much higher than those yielded on test (1). Clearly, this means that the subjects have not perceived quietly the different semantic aspects of the English present tenses.

Table (40): Explanation of the mean, variance, and Standard deviation of the two tests

	Mean	VAR	SD
Test (1)	6.7	2.77	1.66
Test (2)	3.83	2.52	1.59
Differences	2.87	0.25	0.17

Moreover Table (40) apparently, states that there is a significant difference in the students' performance. In fact, Table (40) shows the difference of the significance level through the statistical elements respectively. The mean difference is 2.87, the variance difference is 0.25, and the standard deviation difference is 0.17. Accordingly, it is inferred that the students' knowledge of the English present tenses meaningfully is extremely very weak particularly on test (2).

Table (41): Explanation of the t-test value (*P< 0.001)

VAR	SD	t-test	d.f	Prob
3.50	1.75	7.76	22	0.001

Furthermore, the test analysis discloses the significant differences between the two tests. In other words, Table (41) emphasizes that the subjects have realized much significantly lower points in test (2) than in test (1). Table (41) as a matter of fact discloses the students' disability on the test performance through the t-test value of 7.76, *p<0.001 with 22 d.f. depending on the significant difference of the two mean scores of the two tests. Table (41) also refutes the null hypothesis saying that there is no difference in the students' performance in the two tests. On the other hand, Table (41) states the research hypothesis that according to the t-test value of 7.76, *p<0.001 with 22 d.f. there is a highly significant difference in the subjects' performance in the two tests indicating that they have a semantic problem with the English present tenses which have different semantic forms.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Table (40) and Table (41) the readable statistical elements show that the subjects have achieved extremely bad results which are not expected at all especially from those who are specialists in English and who are going to work on ELT. Actually, the results disclose that the students' knowledge is inadequate. In other words, the subjects cannot recognize semantically the different uses of the English present tenses, that is to say, the simple present and present progressive, and present perfect. The huge number of errors made in test (2) also indicates that the students are quietly ignorant and/or unaware of the semantics of the different aspects which the English present tenses have. The errors of verb forms cannot be ascribed to the learners' native language, Arabic,

rather these should be treated as a cause of intralingual interference because English has many tenses while Arabic has only two aspects, imperfective and perfective. In addition, what the subjects did on test (2) might be due to (i) over-generalization; (ii) lack of practice in the language skills, such as listening and reading; and (iii) lack of a host language environment whose role Dulay et al. (1982) add clearly that a natural language environment plays an important role in developing the learners' language skills. They also emphasize that the ability of remembering the grammatical rules never assists the learner to be of the proficient users of the language.

Moreover, since the English speaking environment cannot be realized in a country like Yemen, and since these students are going to be English teachers, the private and public Yemeni universities and the Ministry of Education as well as the British Council should work together to prepare 'The Teacher-in-Service-Education Programme,' which must be held at least three times a year. The objective of this programme is to help the new and previous Yemeni English teachers who have been working in the field and who will be working in urban, and/or rural areas to be able to update their linguistic and methodological knowledge and practise English more effectively and more properly. The Teacher-in-Service-Education Programme must have different activities such as workshops and skills development in English language which the new and previous Yemeni English teachers can benefit from in both language and methodology.

According to the finding of this experimental study, the English teachers, at all educational levels of middle and high schools and universities must teach students how to use grammar accurately, meaningfully and appropriately. Grammar should be seen as a rational dynamic system which is made of structures distinguished by three aspects of form, meaning and use (Larsen Freeman 1997).

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APPENDIX: A

Test I:

Circle the right choice out of, 'a', 'b', 'c', or 'd' that seems suitable to fill in the blanks. For instance,

She ----- happy.

- a) is b) does c) do d) did

The correct answer is **(a)**.

1- The Browns ----- in the UAE.

- a) work b) working c) works d) does work

2- Jill and Ali ----- written letters to their parents.

- a) have b) having c) has d) does have

3- She is ----- the family's cars.

- a) wash b) washing c) washes d) washed

4- ----- the boys usually go to school on Saturday morning?

- a) Did b) Does c) Do d) Have

5- Jim has ----- in Dubai since 1990.

- a) living b) lives c) live d) lived

6- Mr. Brown is ----- breakfast now.

- a) eat b) eats c) eaten d) having

7- Jane ----- the guitar extremely well.

- a) playing b) plays c) do play d) play

8- We are ----- a shower right now.

- a) take b) took c) taking d) taken
-

Test II:

Choose the right letter 'a', 'b', 'c', or 'd' which gives the exact meaning of the Head Sentence for example,
This student is good.

- a. She was good.
- b. She was a good student.
- c. She will be a good student.
- d. She is a good student.

The right answer is **(d)**.

1- The baby is being noisy.

- a. The baby is always noisy.
- b. The baby is noisy.
- c. The baby is noisy right now.
- d. The baby has been noisy

2- They are coming to the party on next Monday.

- a. They have to come to the party on next Monday.
- b. They will be coming to the party on next Monday.
- c. They are going to come to the party on next Monday.
- d. They will come to the party on next Monday.

3- She is playing football on Monday afternoon.

- a. She will play football on Monday afternoon.
- b. She will have played football by Monday afternoon.
- c. She is going to play football on Monday afternoon.
- d. She will be playing football on Monday afternoon.

4- The flight 85 arrives in Sana'a at noon.

- a. The flight 85 will arrive in Sana'a at noon.
- b. The flight 85 can arrive in Sana'a at noon.

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- c. The flight 85 is arriving in Sana'a at noon.
- d. The flight 85 has been arriving in Sana'a at noon.

5- The moon goes round the earth.

- a. The moon is going around the earth.
- b. The moon has been going around the earth and will be continuing doing so.
- c. The moon has gone round the earth.
- d. The moon will be going around the earth.

6- The football match starts at 3:00p.m.

- a. The football does not start at 3:00 p.m.
- b. The football match has started at 3:00 p.m.
- c. The football match always starts at 3:00 p.m.
- d. The football match is going to begin at 3:00 p.m.

7- The journalist has been assassinated.

- a. The journalist was killed.
- b. The journalist has committed suicide.
- c. The journalist is dead.
- d. The journalist is still a live.

8- Jane has been to all over India.

- a. She knew India very well.
- b. She did not know India well.
- c. She knows India well.
- d. She has been in India for a long time.

9- Tom has never had scarlet fever.

- a. He cannot get scarlet fever.
- b. He can still get scarlet fever.
- c. He has got scarlet fever.
- d. He is experiencing scarlet fever.

10- I have read the story.

- a. I have not finished the story.
- b. I did not finish the story.
- c. I have been reading the story.
- d. I have finished the story.

11- The book has been read.

- a. The book is read.
- b. The book was read.
- c. The book is being read.
- d. The book had been read.

12- He cannot come to the office because he has broken his leg.

- a. He has to stay at home because his leg is broken.
 - b. He is forced to be at home because he has a healthy problem.
 - c. If he is healthy he can come to the office.
 - d. Because of his broken arm, he is not able to carry his suitcase.
-

‘WHY HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS FIND THE ENGLISH TENSES VAGUE?’

"Pragmatics is the study of how language is used in communication"

(Ellis, 1995:719)

"The pragmatics of language is concerned with audience-directed intention- how the speaker or writer intends the utterance to be taken."

(Olson, 1994:119)

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ABSTRACT

The high school teachers are confused in the use of the English verb forms and their meanings. This present experimental study conducted 2001-2002 endeavors to investigate it through two tests; the first test centers on the English verb forms and the next test on the semantics of English verbs. Of course, in relation to the two tests testing the sample both the English verb forms and the meaning of the English tense the null hypothesis says that there is no significant difference between the first and the second test. However the findings of the two tests reveal that the subjects could have not distinguished the different uses of English verbs. They also indicate obviously that the subjects are somewhat unaware of the semantics of the various aspects which English has.

INTRODUCTION

The English tense might, so to speak, represent a universal problem to English learners. Harmer (1998) claims that different scholars at different times have worked hard for many years to describe the present perfect tense. Close (1958) argues that the use of English tense semantically confuses learners of English as a second or foreign language. Bache (1985) agrees with Close and says that not only are foreign learners of English confused in the use of English tense but also six generations of scholars have been puzzled by multifarious uses of the simple and progressive forms and this is normally reflected in the description of the relationship between the forms and meanings of the system. However, he adds that the semantic use of the English tense which troubles so much the foreign students does not bother the native speaker at all. The native speaker can immediately use one tense form

describing her/his meaning efficiently because s/he has acquired the use of that form from her/his social environment. Close also says that in English grammar all time might be considered as the present till it is changed to the past or the future. He further claims that the present tenses are present perfect, present simple and present progressive. The present progressive indicates that an act is performed at the moment of speaking, e.g., '*They are speaking now*', and the present simple indicates that an act is done habitually, e.g. '*She speaks Arabic fluently.*' Some verbs as well not used in the progressive are only used in the present simple, e.g. '*Now you hear what he says.*' Culicover (1976) adds that English verbs, which probably take part in verbal sequences, have different forms with different meanings, e.g. *be, do, have, and write*. Weinreich (1972) affirms that English tense creates vague meanings, e.g. '*Playing football is interesting,*' '*She studies the whole term.*' The ambiguity in each sentence is created by the transformational rules yielding some surface results from various deep structures and from the words probably operating in double syntactic abilities, e.g. *play* is both an intransitive and a transitive verb.

Furthermore, Bloomfield (1963: 154) held a view similar to Close and Culicover and said that "each linguistic form has a constant and definite meaning, different from the meaning of any other linguistic form in the same language. Thus, hearing someone's utterances such as '*I'm hungry*' we assume that (i) the differences in sound are irrelevant (unphonetic), (ii) the situations of the several speakers contain common features and the differences between these situations are irrelevant (unsemantic), and (iii) this linguistic meaning is different from that of any other form in the language. We have seen that this assumption cannot be verified since the speaker's intentions and the hearer's responses may involve almost anything in the whole world and in particular depend largely on the momentary state of their nervous system". English has many tenses creating confusion about meaning. They are classified into semantic and grammatical categories, which do not relate to each other.

Since time and tense are involved, the tense form in a language which may or may not have a time reference, e.g. *Chinese probably deals with all the demands which it requires or probably does not* (Hocking 1974). Concerning the past and the present perfect, the past tense cannot be used directly in conversation. The past tense should be introduced by the present perfect tense. In other words, the conversation should definitely start in the present perfect and progress to the past tense. They behave like the indefinite/definite English articles, e.g. *I have received the parcel. The postman gave it to me.*

A: *I have been to Dubai only once.*

B: *How did you like it?*

A: *It was interesting. It had a beautiful weather all the time.*

As soon as the definite time has been found, the past tense can be applied to specify actions and for events which will take place simultaneously. However, when the object or subject of the sentence is unique (a proper name) the definiteness reaches over the verb form with the result that the past tense is chosen, e.g. with the indefinite, *Fred has bought a pen*, with the definite, *Fred brought this pen* (Leech 1971).

Moreover, since the English tense is confusing, Long (1988,1991) suggests two ways which may help students learn English as a second or foreign language. They are classified into two phases: *Focus on form* and *focus on meaning*. The first phase encourages the student to pay attention to linguistic elements which help to concentrate on meaning or communication. The second phase is based on the traditional method of teaching distinctive grammatical categories. Norris and Ortega (2000: 209,438) agree with Long (1991) and state that “focus on form” should meet these four criteria (i) designing tasks to promote learner engagement with meaning prior to form; (ii) seeking to attain and document task essentiality or naturalness of the L2 forms. (iii) seeking to ensure that instruction was unobtrusive; (iv) documenting learner’s mental process

‘noticing’”. Norris and Ortega’s study emphasizes first on form and next on exercises through which learners can distinguish form-meaning relationships. Dickens and Woods (1988) say that the use of either the present perfect simple or the present perfect continuous depends on factors, the context of which always meaningfully presents the sentence with certain type of discorsal form; the speaker’s attitude that describes what s/he is stating. For example,

I have lived in Dubai for 20 years,
I have been living in Dubai for 20 years.

Here the use of the progressive and non-progressive forms are probably based on the speaker’s attitude related to the period that s/he has spent in Dubai. Therefore, the grammar rule is able to describe the use of forms semantically and test them practically. Other scholars like King (1983), Comrie (1976) and Quirk et al. (1973) attempt to explain the simple present perfect and present perfect continuous and say that these two tenses have different meanings, e.g.

- (i) ‘*Who has eaten my chocolate?*’ (Perfect)
- (ii) ‘*Who has been eating my chocolate?*’ (Continuous)

In the first example, the whole chocolate has been eaten whereas in the next one, a piece has been left. The result of these two tenses is that the tense in the first sentence is perfective whereas in the second one is continuous or imperfective.

Comrie (1976) further attempts to express some events in the present perfect tense form and classify them as follows:

- (i) Perfect of result: This perfect is used to manifest clearly the present relevance of a previous event, e.g. *Ali has come*, refers to the result of Ali’s coming.

(ii) Experiential perfect: This type of perfect explains an event held once in the past and continued up to the present, e.g. *She has been to Al-Ain since 2000*, indicates the present relevance of the result.

(iii) Perfect of persistent situation: This type of perfect describes an event or action starting in the past and extending into present, e.g. *They have been waiting since 9:00*. This kind of perfect mentioned above explains the present relevance never conveying recentness which is probably a sufficient condition for present relevance, e.g. *They have just left*. However, concerning the simple present tense Bache (1985), Comrie (1976), King (1983) and Quirk et al. (1973) claim that the simple present tense can describe not only the present meaning but also the habitual meaning, e.g. '*He goes to school*,' the timeless meaning, e.g. '*The moon goes around the earth*' and the future meaning used with conditional temporal clauses and planned events, e.g.

- (i) *The plane leaves at 6:30 tomorrow morning.*
- (ii) *I will call him before I visit him.*
- (ii) *If she finds them, she will be happy.*

Also the simple past tense can express not only the past meaning, e.g. *They worked hard* but also the present meaning, e.g. *Did he want to tell the police about it now?*, the hypothetical meaning, e.g. *If she came, he would be happy*, and sometimes even the future meaning, e.g. *I hoped I could see my son the day after tomorrow*.

Regarding the present progressive planned in the present and used with dynamic transitional verbs, e.g. *arrive, come, go*, refer to the future, e.g. *He is leaving for Cairo at 8 O'clock tomorrow morning. Ali and Alya are getting married in the next month.*

King (1983) endeavors to explain the present progressive and says that the present progressive form is semantically imperfective, that is, the

structural view of event lies in the middle whereas the non-progressive form is semantically perfective, that is the situation viewed is entirely complete. It has been noted that aspect and tense do occasionally make effect on each other. The present tense is applied to explain actions going on at the present moment, either progressive or habitual which are imperfective, e.g. with habitual meaning, *He works hard* and with progressive meaning *He is working hard* (Comrie 1983). In addition, Comrie uses two grammatical terms related to the progressive present called telic and atelic events and says that the telic situations have a terminal point and it is imperfective, e.g. *He is writing a story*, *He is writing three stories* whereas the atelic situation has no terminal point and it is perfective, e.g.

He is writing, *He is writing stories*. The full auxiliary forms, *will*, *shall* are always used with three persons to explain futurity, e.g. *I /you/we will discuss it*. But *shall* is used with the first person to explain a neutral prediction and with the second-third person to explain a threat, e.g.

(i) *Someday, you shall die*. and (ii) *Someday, she shall die*. The *will/shall* future is used to describe predictions and/or prophetic sentences, e.g.

(i) *It will be raining tomorrow*.

(ii) *In the next month, the food prices will increase*.

Also *be going to* expresses the present intention and/or present cause, e.g. *Next month, we are going to have another test*, *I think I am going to be successful*, and with immediate future; *He is going to make an accident*.

As for the *will/shall* future-progressive, it is used to predict temporary events in the future, e.g. *This time tomorrow, I will be flying over the red sea*. It is also used to indicate a single complete event (Leech 1973, Kasper et al. 1977), e.g. *The bus will be leaving at eight O'clock*. Leech and Kasper et al. endeavour to add that the *will/shall*-

progressive usage is always applied in everyday conversation because it is more polite than the future simple form.

As for the future perfect tense form, it is totally predictable, that is, at or inside specific time in the future. This proposition will be perfective (Kasper et al. 1977), e.g. *Your birthday is on 1st June. Really, then, by June I will have been 15 years old.* In addition, Kasper et al. attempt to formulate the law of least effect related to the future perfect through which the future perfect form could be changed into sentences typical in meaning, e.g.

- (i) a. *In ten years, he hopes he will have made lot money to retire.*
b. *In ten years time, he hopes to have made a lot of money to retire.*
- (ii) a. *She'll have done it by eight o'clock.*
b. *She'll have it done by eight o'clock.*

METHODOLOGY

Informants

Two of the high schools especially those located in the main cities of Yemen were randomly chosen. From these two high schools, the English teachers who have got the Bachelor degrees from the Yemeni Universities, Faculty of Education, English Language Departments and who are now teaching English at high schools were randomly selected. They are between 26-35 years old. Table (42) below tells us what these cities are and how many high schools and teachers have participated in this experimental study.

Table (42): Cities, schools, female and male teachers' description

Main cities		No. of high Schools	No. of Teachers		Total
			Males	Females	
Sana'a	High school for boys	1		10	15
	High school for girls	1	5		
Aden	High school for boys	1		9	13
	High school for girls	1	4		
Taiz	High school for boys	1		9	13
	High school for girls	1	4		
Hadramout	High school for boys	1		9	13
	High school for girls	1	4		

Main cities		No. of high Schools	No. of Teachers		Total
			Males	Females	
Ibb	High school for boys	1		9	13
	High school for girls	1	4		
Abyan	High school for boys	1		7	10
	High school for girls	1	3		
Hodedia	High school for boys	1		9	13
	High school for girls	1	4		
Al-Daleh	High school for boys	1		7	10
	High school for girls	1	3		
Thamar	High school for boys	1		6	11
	High school for girls	1	5		
Total		18	36	75	111

Two tests were prepared to test semantically the informants' perception and knowledge of the English tenses. In fact, the first test having 10 items examines the different verb-forms and the second test having 15 items examines the different semantic aspects of the English tenses.

Procedure

In each school, the two tests were presented to the teachers in the departments of English language after they had finished their classes. These two tests having 25 items in total were administered in the academic year 2001-2002 between January and June.

The test was sent to my colleagues who live in the respective towns (see Table (42)). Of course, they administered the test according to the instructions which accompanied it.

All test papers were received in July, 2002.

The Aim

The objective of this experimental study is to examine meaningfully the subjects' perception and knowledge of the English tenses. In other words, this study intends to test if the subjects know the relationship between the English tenses-forms and their meanings.

DATA ANALYSIS

On test (1) and test (2), the subjects were required to choose the right alternative out of the four given choices, i.e. (a), (b), (c), and (d) out of which gives the exact meaning of the head sentence. Test (2) presented in Table (44) has 15 items. It is classified into three groups. The first group (1-7) deals with the simple present and the present continuous form describing the usual and future functions and the present continuous form

that expresses the current and future functions. The next group (8-13) tests the present perfect form and the third group (14-15) tests the past tense.

Table (43): Errors frequency and their percentages description

No. of Items	No. Of Error	Percentage
1	9	13.63
2	5	7.57
3	3	4.55
4	7	10.61
5	5	7.57
6	7	10.61
7	7	10.61
8	3	4.55
9	9	13.64
10	11	16.66
Total	66	100%

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On test (1), the informants did very well. The errors they committed on this test are extremely low in number. The total number of

errors is only 66 that is, 6% while the number of the correct answers is 1044 (94%). This means that the subjects may have good knowledge of the English verb-forms.

On test (2) however the participants were confused in selecting the right answers. They actually could not recognize the different semantic aspects of the English tenses. Therefore, they committed a large number of errors. The use of the English tense semantically confuses learners of English as a second or foreign language (Close 1958). Table (44) below shows the errors and their percentages produced on each item.

Table(44):The frequent errors of test (2) and their percentages description

No. of Items	No. Of Error	Percentage
1	15	1.41
2	80	5.63
3	52	4.88
4	51	4.79
5	87	8.17
6	75	7.04
7	99	9.30
8	64	6.01
9	84	7.89
10	100	9.39
11	87	8.29
12	88	8.26
13	57	5.35
14	81	7.61
15	85	7.98
Total	1065	100%

Table (44) tells us that subjects have made of a large number of errors, that is to say, the errors which they committed totally on test (2) are 1065 (63.96%) while the right answers are 600 (36.04%). In addition Table (44) shows respectively the errors participants produced on test (2). On items (1-7) most subjects chose the wrong answers. For example, the subjects selected 2-a *The baby is always noisy*.

2-The baby is being noisy.

- e. The baby is always noisy.
- f. The baby is noisy.
- g. The baby is right now noisy.
- h. The baby has been noisy.

They had to select 2-c *The baby is right now noisy*, which consents to the meaning of the head sentence. The errors they committed on this item are 52 (4.88%). With item (4) the informants selected the incorrect alternative 4-d *She will be playing football on Monday afternoon* that does not give the right meaning of the head sentence. They should have selected 4-c *She going to play football on Monday afternoon* which gives the meaning of the head sentence. Also in sentence 5 the correct choice in 5-c *The flight 85 is arriving in Sana'a at noon* that agrees with the meaning of the head sentence; But the subjects selected the wrong one, i.e. 5-a *The flight 85 will arrive in Sana'a at noon* The number of errors committed on this item is 87 (8.17%). On items (1-7), the errors produced are 340 (31.87%) out of 1065 errors which were made on the other items. (Culicover 1976) states that the English verbs while taking part in verbal sequences have different forms with different meanings. This big number of errors on items (1-7) is attributed to the participants' ignorance of the functions of the English tenses, viz; simple present and present continuous or it is due to the overgeneralization and/or lack of practice speaking English.

Regarding items (8-13) testing the present perfect tense, the subjects were required to select the right alternatives having the same meaning of the head sentences. What the informants did on items (1-7) was repeated on items (8-13). For example, the incorrect item 6-a *The journalist was killed* was selected instead of the right one, 6-c *The journalist is dead*. The item 7-a *The moon is going round the earth* was selected instead of the acceptable answer, 7-b *The moon has been going around the earth and will be continuing doing so* which has the meaning of the head sentence. The errors made on this item are 64 (6%) out of 1065 errors produced on the other items. On item (9) the informants should have selected 9-c *She knows India well* as it conveys the same meaning as the meaning of the head sentence, but they selected the incorrect one, 9-d *She has been in India for a long time*. The errors yielded on item 9 are 84(7.89%). As for item (10) they preferred to choose 10-a *He cannot get scarlet fever*. Though the correct answer 10-b *He can still get the scarlet fever* which conveys the meaning of the head sentence. The errors committed on this item are 100(9.39%). In connection with items (12) they should have chosen 12-a *The book is read*; however, they chose the unacceptable answers 12-d *The book had been read* which never agrees with the meaning of the head sentence.

In fact, all the errors committed on items (8-13) are much higher than those made on the other items on test (2). The actual number of the errors produced on these items (8-13) is 559(52.49%) out of 1065 errors which were yielded on the other items of this test. Not only are the foreign learners of English confused in English tense but also six generations of scholars have been puzzled by multifarious uses of the simple and progressive forms (Bache 1985). This large number of the errors is due to the lack of the subjects' knowledge of the present perfect tense. Also it may be attributed to the informants' carelessness when answering the test and/or the non-English speaking environment never helping them to recall the grammatical rules and speak English properly.

With reference to items (14-15) the subjects were required to choose the right alternatives that give the exact meaning of the head sentences. However, on these items they selected the wrong ones, 14-b *They were reading a lot when they were at the University* and 15-a *John was playing when he was a child*. The correct alternatives are 14-a *They read a lot when they were at the University*, and 15-c *John would play when he was a child* that correspond with the meanings of the head sentences. The number of errors committed on the items (14-15) is 166 (15.59%) out of 1065 errors committed on the other items of test (2).

All the errors made on all the items (1-15) of test (2) are attributed to the lack of the subjects' perception and/or knowledge of the different semantic aspects of the English tense. According to (Weinreich 1972), the English verb creates vague meanings. In addition, it is probably due to the environment in which they cannot find people to speak English with and assist them to recall the grammatical rules and practise speaking the language effectively. Dulay et al. (1982) confirm that a natural language environment plays an extremely important role in developing communication skills.

It is clear that the two tests have presented a very significant difference. In fact, the subjects have done very well on the first test while on the second test they have not. Table (43) informs us that the informants have done well in test (1). This means that they know well the English verb-forms. However, Table (44) tells us that the participants have committed a lot of errors on test (2) which are much higher than those produced on test (1). Apparently, this means that the informants have not perceived completely the different semantic aspects of the English tense.

Table (45): The mean, variance and standard deviation description of the two tests

	Mean	VAR	SD	s \bar{D}
Test (1)	10.653	9.181	3.030	2.91
Test (2)	5.324	13.967	3.737	1.68
Differences	5.329	4.786	0.707	1.23

Further Table (45) clearly states that there is a significant difference in the subjects' performance. In fact, Table (45) presents the difference of the significance level through the statistical elements respectively. The mean difference is 5.329, the variance difference is 4.786, the standard deviation is 0.708, and the standard error difference is 1.23. As a result, it is inferred that the subjects' knowledge of the English semantic tenses is extremely weak especially on test (2).

Table (46): The t-test value description

Mean	VAR	SD	s \bar{D}	t-test	d.f	*P
	20.957	4.5786	0.4343	12.269	110	0.001

*P< 0.001

Then, the test analysis reveals the significant differences between the two tests. In other words, Table (46) emphasizes that the participants have realized much significantly lower scores on test (2) than on test (1). Table (46) actually reveals the informants' disability on the test performance through the t test value of 12.269, *p<0.001 with 110 d.f.

which is based on the significant difference of the two mean scores of the two tests. Also Table (46) refutes the null hypothesis saying that there is no difference in the subjects' performance. On the other hand, Table (46) confirms the research hypothesis that according to the t-test value of 12.269, $*p < 0.001$ with 110 d.f. there is a highly significant difference in the informants' performance on the two tests indicating that they have a semantic problem with the English tense which has different semantic forms.

CONCLUSION

In connection with test (2) which is clearly described in Table (44), Table (45) and Table (46) the readable statistical factors show that the subjects have achieved extremely bad results which are not expected at all especially from those who are specialists in English and working on ELT. As a matter of fact, the results reveal that the subjects' knowledge is inadequate. In other words, they cannot distinguish semantically the different uses of the English tenses, that is to say, the simple present and present progressive, the simple past and past progressive, and the past and present perfect. The large number of errors produced on test (2) also indicates that the informants are completely ignorant and/or unaware of the semantics of the various aspects which English has. The errors of verb forms cannot be ascribed to the learners' native language, Arabic, rather these should be treated as a cause of intralingual interference. Additionally what the participants did on test (2) might be due to (i) over-generalization, (ii) lack of practice in the language skills, such as listening and reading, and (iii) lack of a host language environment whose role Dulay et al. (1982) confirm explicitly that a natural language environment plays a vital role in developing the learners' language skills. They also emphasize that the ability of recalling the grammatical rules never helps the learner to be of the proficient users of the language. And since the

natural language environment cannot be realized in a country like Yemen, the private and public Yemeni Universities and the Ministry of Education as well as the British Council should work together to prepare ‘The Teacher-in-Service-Education Programme,’ which must be held at least twice a year. The purpose of this programme is to assist the Yemeni English teachers working in urban, and rural areas to able to update their knowledge in ELT and practise English more effectively. The Teacher-in-Service-Education Programme must include various activities (e.g. workshops and skills development in English language) which the Yemeni English teachers can benefit from in both language and methodology.

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APPENDIX: A-1

Test I:

Circle the right choice out of, 'a', 'b', 'c', or 'd' that seems suitable to fill in the blanks. For instance,
She ----- happy.

- a) is b) does c) do d) did

The correct answer is (a).

9- The Browns ----- in the UAE.

- a) work b) working c) works d) does work

10- Jill and Ali ----- written letters to their parents.

- a) have b) having c) has d) does have

11- She is ----- the family's cars.

- a) wash b) washing c) washes d) washed

12- ----- the boys usually go to school on Saturday morning?

- a) Did b) Does c) Do d) Have

13- Jim has ----- in Dubai since 1990.

- a) living b) lives c) live d) lived

14- Mr. Brown is ----- breakfast now.

- a) eat b) eats c) eaten d) having

15- Jane ----- the guitar extremely well.

- a) playing b) plays c) do play d) play

16- We are ----- a shower right now.

- a) take b) took c) taking d) taken

17- The girls I lived with ----- for their country, Yemen.

- a)leaves b)leaving c)left d)leave

18- The students Yemeni nationals ----- to study at Kent University.

- a)admitted b)had admitted
c)had been admitting d)had been admitted
-

APPENDIX: A-2

Test II:

Choose the right letter 'a', 'b', 'c', or 'd' which gives the exact meaning of the Head Sentence for example,

This student is good.

- a. He was good.
- b. He was a good student.
- c. He will be a good student.
- d. He is a good student.

The right answer is (d).

1- I will tell her when she comes back.

- i. When returning, I will tell her.
- j. If I go to her office, I will tell her.
- k. Unless I find her in her office, I will wait for her.
- l. When leaving, I will tell her.

2-The baby is being noisy.

- a. The baby is always noisy.
- b. The baby is noisy.
- c. The baby is right now noisy.
- d. The baby has been noisy

3-They are coming to the party on next Monday.

- a. They have to come to the party on next Monday.
- b. They will be coming to the party on next Monday.

- c. They are going to come to the party on next Monday.
- d. They will come to the party on next Monday.

4- She is playing football on Monday afternoon.

- a. She will play football on Monday afternoon.
- b. She will have played football by Monday afternoon.
- c. She is going to play football on Monday afternoon.
- d. She will be playing football on Monday afternoon.

5- The flight 85 arrives in Sana'a at noon.

- a. The flight 85 will arrive in Sana'a at noon.
- b. The flight 85 can arrive in Sana'a at noon.
- c. The flight 85 is arriving in Sana'a at noon.
- d. The flight 85 has been arriving in Sana'a at noon.

6- The journalist has been assassinated.

- a. The journalist was killed.
- b. The journalist has committed suicide.
- c. The journalist is dead.
- d. The journalist is still a live.

7- The moon goes round the earth.

- a. The moon is going around the earth.
- b. The moon has been going around the earth and will be continuing doing so.
- c. The moon has gone round the earth.
- d. The moon will be going around the earth.

8- The football match starts at 3:00p.m.

- a. The football does not start at 3:00 p.m.
- b. The football match has started at 3:00 p.m.
- c. The football match always starts at 3:00 p.m.
- d. The football match is going to begin at 3:00 p.m.

9- Jane has been to all over India.

- a. She knew India very well.
- b. She did not know India well.
- c. She knows India well.
- d. She has been in India for a long time.

10- Tom has never had scarlet fever.

- a. He cannot get scarlet fever.
- b. He can still get scarlet fever.
- c. He has got scarlet fever.
- d. He is experiencing scarlet fever.

11- I have read the story.

- a. I have not finished the story.
- b. I did not finish the story.
- c. I have been reading the story.
- d. I have finished the story.

12- The book has been read.

- a. The book is read.
- b. The book was read.
- c. The book is being read.
- d. The book had been read.

13- He cannot come to the office because he has broken his leg.

- a. He has to stay at home because his leg is broken.
- b. He is forced to be at home because he has a healthy problem.
- c. If he is healthy he can come to the office.
- d. Because of his broken arm, he is not able to carry his suitcase.

- 14- They used to read a lot when they were at the university.
- a. They read a lot when they were at the university.
 - b. They were reading a lot when they were at the university.
 - c. They had read a lot when they were at the university.
 - d. They had been reading a lot when they were at the university.
- 15- John played when he was a child.
- a. John was playing when he was a child.
 - b. John had played when he was a child.
 - c. John would play when he was a child.
 - d. John had been playing when he was a child.
-

⁷ACQUISITION OF THE ENGLISH ARTICLES BY ARABIC-SPEAKING STUDENTS: STUDY OF THE SECOND AND THIRD LEVEL STUDENTS IN YEMEN

"The analysis of discourse is, necessarily, the analysis of language in use. As such, it cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent of the purposes or functions which those forms are designed to serve in human affairs."

(Brown and Yule, 1983:1)

"... one must learn more than just the pronunciation, the lexical items, the appropriate word order,... one must also learn the appropriate way to use those words and sentences in the second language."

(Gass and Selinker, 1994:182)

⁷ Published in Indian Linguistics: Journal of the Linguistic Society of India, Vol. 64, No. 1-4, 2003, India

ABSTRACT

English as a second language has difficult elements which hinder the learner's learning. One of these difficult factors, for instance, in English is the articles which are difficult on the part of the learners to learn. Confusion and irritation create obstacles by which learners cannot use the English articles properly. Krashen et al. (1982) claim that the use of articles seems to resist explicit instruction (i.e. teaching through rules) because conscious learning is not efficient when the task is complex, as in the case of articles. This claim of Krashen is doubtful. The English article system actually presents difficult problems to the ESL learner whose native language may either have no articles or may use articles in a different way. For example, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Russian, and Persian have no articles.

Arab students always make errors in their writing. They cannot actually recognize the different aspects of the use of the English articles, the/ a (an) or zero article especially with mass or abstract or non-countable nouns. It has been proved that the use of the English definite/indefinite articles is a serious source of difficulty to Arab-speaking students (Kharma 1981). Kharma says that errors in the use of the English articles are caused by the mother tongue interference because Arabic has only two articles i.e. the indefinite article "zero" and the definite article 'the'. In fact, it does not have an indefinite article like 'a (an)' of English.

The purpose of this study is to investigate if the Arabic-speaking learner understands the English articles, the/a (an) and/ or "zero" article and use them well if he/she is put in an intensive English programme and in an English speaking environment in which people speak English. Rubin (1987) claims that a successful learning process will be performed properly if students are given opportunities to act upon the learning

material efficiently particularly when understanding it. The learning environment containing opportunities, experiences and ideas work more effectively. The definite sentence and/or social situation helps the learners to understand the meaning of a word or phrase. Inference (deductive/inductive) assists students to perceive the relations among words phrases and social interactions which decide the meaning of a social occasion.

INTRODUCTION

Fundamental questions about the acquisition and use of the English article system remain to be answered. For example, it is unclear whether the articles are acquired as a single system or related elements, or as independent acquisitions. It is not known whether dimensions or principles different from those in the adult system are important for the first use of the articles. Native English speaking children use a first and the actually replaces a later (Zelhar 1982).

Some problems that a second language learner may face with the article system of English relates to the first language interference. Not only do students misuse the articles but also teachers have the problem. Teachers whose mother tongue has articles of a different type are confused with the English article system (Lacey 1977). Those students whose native languages have different sound systems than English sometimes have trouble instituting the phonetic rule that differentiates the indefinite articles a (an) and students whose native languages quantify definiteness differently than English may have special trouble with the English system (Zelhar 1971). The use of definite article is often a source of errors for foreign learner of English, especially if his mother tongue doesn't show some clear tools of describing that the definite article in English (Grannis 1971). The misusing of articles in English has always been considered one of the most unsolvable problems to overcome in teaching English grammar to foreigners (Hawkins 1978). Practically, all non-naïve speakers have difficulty in leaning some aspects of article usage (Oller and Redding 1971).

However, many problems the second language learners have with English articles go beyond first language interference. Students from Europe, Asia, South America and the Arab students all make similar errors in the use of the English articles, despite their widely different

native languages. Omission, wrong insertion, confusion in the use of English articles, a, the and -s, are observed (McEldowney 1977). There are two explanations for the difficulty of the article system: that articles are meaningless and redundant code markers, and that within the system, there is an interference of form and function (More than one article can mean the same thing). McEldowney suggests that teachers present their students with a simplified system of article use, dividing nouns into discrete categories of any, general and special, which correspond with each of these articles, and that teachers reserve the more complex, intersecting native system of usage for presentation as exceptions. Similarly Lacey (1977) suggests a simplified system which uses the aspects of definiteness and *number* to state a set of rules for the common article use. Hawkins (1979) points out that aspects to definiteness are highly contextual and referential; they depend almost entirely on notions held on the minds of the speaker and listener. The use of the articles in English must be described essentially in terms of reference (Grannis 1971).

THE ARTICLE USAGE

The was found in Old English in the form the and it meant a masculine demonstrative pronoun. Then, its use has undergone changes. When the is followed by a noun, it indicates definiteness. Similarly, a was found in Old English meaning one. This function of a is still used today (Lane 1981). A is used before singular nouns when they are unknown. This is related to new information and old information; that is, when the object that the speaker refers to is new or not familiar to him and the listener, the speaker is required to mention his first reference with a as in: A book is on the table. The use of a informs that the speaker and listener are not familiar with the book. The book is not known and this is new information. This new information makes the speaker and listener aware of a book. Then, the new information becomes old. The book lying on the table is new. Lane (1981) distinguishes the functions of the use of the, a,

and the zero which the speaker and listener can understand easily. According to Lane, these functions are:

I (a): The use of the

- 1) Whether the noun head is singular/plural or countable as in: the table.
- 2) Whether the noun head has a classifying function as in: The office is large.

II (b): The use of the as well

- 1) Before a definite noun head previously by context or circumstances, e.g. the headmaster, the dean.
- 2) Before a branch of human endeavor, e.g. the law.
- 3) Before many geographical names as in: the United States, the United Arab Emirates.
- 4) Before the musical instruments, e.g. Don't use the guitar.
- 5) Before physical positions, e.g. the top, the back.
- 6) Before points in time as in: the future, the past.
- 7) Before ordinals, e.g. the fifth president.
- 8) Before superlatives as in; the happiest boy. Also, the is used in special ways;
 - a) The is used to call emphasis to show uniqueness as in, she is the woman to go.
 - b) Before the body parts where the noun head is in prepositional phrase.

Here the article becomes the same as the possessive as in, the shoulder, moles on the arm. The can also function as an adverb, e.g. He works as the hardest. The last function of the as a definite determiner is in a large group of idioms. The is used before the name of a commodity or any familiar part of daily life in such idioms as:

- 1) Wash the dishes.
- 2) Take out the garbage.
- 3) Walk into the house.
- 4) Go to the bathroom.

Also the is used in old, aphoristic construction idioms as in,

The more you study, the more you understand;

The more, the happier, and proverbs like;

The early bird catches the worm.

Definite description the is used to refer inclusively to all objects as in,

I broke the large incisor.

Now indefinite articles a has many functions. These functions are as follows:

I:

- 1) Whether the noun head is singular/plural, as in a table.
- 2) Whether the noun head has a classifying function as in. A room is large.

II: Function of a is that of singularity. That is, when people speak of one. In this function, a appears in several ways:

- 1) As the actual number one as in, he has a book.
- 2) As an undifferentiated specimen in class, e.g. She found a book there.
- 3) To introduce an appositive, e.g. John, a hard worker, comes in time.

III:

- 1) Indefinite article a is used with the body parts when there are more than one as in. Jim lost a leg in the war, meaning, Jim lost his leg in the war.
- 2) Also, the indefinite article a is used not to refer to as in, I broke a large incisor.
- 3) The indefinite a is used in figurative language. A is always used in simile and metaphor. For examples:

He is a lion;

Her cheek is a red apple;

He is brave as a lion;

Her cheek is like a red apple;

Strong as a bull

- 4)(a): The indefinite article a is also used idiomatically with objects which come after make and take, e.g.:

Make a fool of;

Make a living;

Make a fresh start;

Take a picture;

Take a stance.

Take a while.

- b) With objects come after do, become, tell,

Do a favor.

Become a bum.

Tell a lie.

- c) The indefinite article a is used with many prepositional phrases denoting time, e.g.:

In a work.

For a week.

In a hurry.

Around an hour.

d) It is used with many transformation markers, e.g.:

As a result

As a rule

To take an example

IV: Finally, here are the nouns which usually don't take the indefinite/definite articles. These nouns are organized as follows:

1) Non-countable and plural nouns can delete the articles,

(a) as in: Sand is soft;

Eggs are cheap.

(b) as in the name of holidays, e.g.:

Christmas

Easter

(c) names of familiar places also delete the articles, 'the', a' e.g.:

Children go to school;

Children return home or
go back;

People go to work.

(d) The names of physical ailments don't take articles, e.g.:
cancer, smallpox, polio. Also, generic references don't work
with their classification, e.g. mankind, lions, birds.

(e) The divisions of the world and the universe as well as
continents, e.g.: Africa, Asia, Australia, Alaska, and the
divisions of outer space as in the planets by names, e.g.
Venus, Mars.

V: Moreover, many idiomatic phrases have no articles which closely
bound to personal concept and emotions. For instance:

1) Personal emotion

(a) To work heart and soul

(b) To become man and wife

(c) To shake hands with

(d) To make love with

(e) To pride in

2) Personal concepts

- (a) To fight for liberty
- (b) To work to death
- (c) To reject terrorism

Harmer (1998), McArthur (1998) and Quirk et al (1985) claim that the definite can have a specific and generic reference, e.g.:

The governor comes to his office early;

The house we live in is old;

The dolphin is a friendly creature.

Similarly, the indefinite article can have the same e.g.,

He is an old man.

A good student gets up early.

They add that the definite the used with nationality nouns and adjectives has a generic reference, examples,

The British prefer coffee to tea.

The rich sometime are happy.

With uncountable and plural nouns, the definite and indefinite articles aren't used.

For example:

Life was so easy 20 years ago.

Students should work hard.

However, Quirk et al. (1985) add that when these three articles are used in object positions in the sentences, the indefinite and Zero articles lose their generic reference, but the definite the does not, for example:

- 1) They have been studying the 20th century play.
- 2) They have been studying a 20th century play.
- 3) They have been studying -- 20th century plays.

The 1st noun phrase 'the 20th century play' in sentence (1) is generic, the 2nd phrase 'a 20th century play' in sentence (2) is specific and the 3rd noun phrase '20th century plays' in sentence (3) indicates only a group of plays. The generic use of the indefinite a (an) cannot indicate quantities attributable to the whole class of species for example (Quirk et al. 1985:282),

- 1) The tiger is becoming almost extinct.
- 2) Tigers are becoming almost extinct.
- 3) A tiger is becoming almost extinct.

The generic reference of the definite article also with the singular noun is not suitable when the referent represents a class of human beings. The native speakers are not sure of the satisfaction of the definite article the in the following sentences:

- 1) The teacher gets a low stained.
- 2) The British man is always active.

Learning the complexities of determiners is indeed a complicated process. Therefore, in this research, the English articles, the/a/zero are studied.

METHOD

Subject:

The informants are Yemeni students. They are 55 students chosen randomly from second and third levels of the English Language Department. Most of them are 21 years old. Their native language is Arabic. They are studying now at the second level and third level of the English Language Department, Faculty of Education, Tahmar University (Yemen).

They have studied English for eight year –three years in middle school, three in high school and two years at the first and second levels of the English Language Department, Thamar University. Although they have spent a long time learning English, they know almost nothing. There are several reasons which hinder their progress in knowing English. First, in middle and high schools teachers don't care much about their students' progress in grammar and in other skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing. Second, they are not encouraged and allowed to discuss the difficulties with their teachers which create obstacles through which they cannot understand and speak English. Third, they are not advised to practice speaking English in and out of the class. In addition, as soon as they leave the class, they cannot remember what they have learnt. If some students practice speaking outside the class, they cannot find people to speak with and the society which they live in speaks Arabic.

On the contrary, here at Thamar University, there are several factors which the learner can benefit from. For example:

- 1) The way of teaching is completely different from that in intermediate and high schools. The medium of teaching is

English. The teachers always encourage their students to speak English in class.

- 2) The students practice speaking with their classmates during and after class.
- 3) They speak English frequently with their teachers. Consequently, their speaking with their teachers assists them to improve their language.

In the first meeting with the informant, it was found that they are eager to have a good command of the English language. They say that they hope to be able to speak and write English as the native speaker does. They add that if they can master English, they will be extremely happy.

MATERIALS AND PROCEDURES

The informants were given thirty minutes to do the pre- and post-test consisting of prepared sentences in which forty-five omitted articles, the, a (an), zero must be filled in. These forty-five items are a sampling of the various article usages in English. Most of these items test the use of a plus a singular noun, e.g. Jim has a book. Some items test the use of an plus a singular noun, e.g. John has an apple; and others require no article. These include proper nouns, e.g. Cars are made of iron; uncountable nouns, e.g. Freedom is good, etc.; familiar nouns (including institutional buildings, school, hospital), dinner, lunch, e.g. They rarely have lunch with their parents, etc., and prepositions plus noun phrases, e.g. He goes to work.

The English nouns were classified into categories and subcategories. They are classified as follows:

Category A: Countable singular nouns

Category B: Proper nouns not taking the

The ESL/EFL Learners' Grammar Acquisition

Subcategory B-1 Noun-countable nouns

B-2 Countable nouns

B-3 Familiar nouns

B-4 Prepositions plus noun phrases

Category C: Proper nouns not taking the

Subcategory C-1 Countable singular/plural nouns

C-2 Uncountable nouns

Expected answers are justified on the bases of an intersection of two teaching grammar rules of the English article system which generates the following system for the unambiguous use of the English article. It is clear that Table (47) below summarizes the specific and generic use of the three articles.

The italicized nouns and/or noun phrases are used in generic reference (Quirk et al. 1985:282):

Table (47): Description of specific and generic use of articles

	Definite		Indefinite	
	Count	Non count	Count	Non count
Singular	<i>the tiger</i>	<i>the furniture</i>	<i>a tiger</i>	(some) <i>furniture</i>
Plural	<i>the tigers</i>		(some) <i>tiger</i>	

THE RESULTING ANALYSIS OF THE PRE-TEST

The subjects have been completely confused in putting the articles in the right places. They have actually put the definite article the and the indefinite article, a (an) indiscriminately in front of the nouns which may or may not need these articles. But with subcategory C-1 according to the test which without question takes the article the, by guess, they have done all the questions well. What they have done in this subcategory C-1 is related to the Arabic language, their mother tongue. In other word, in Arabic, as soon as a noun is known by both the speaker and the listener, the speaker can use the definite article the before it. The learner's mother tongue is found in the target language components. As soon as the grammatical rules of the target language are internalized, the L1 gets in the way of learning the L2 (Ellis 1985). Consequently, the informants have not recognized that the noun in the subcategory C-2 according to the test presented needs just the definite article the. I guess, they have just filled in the blanks according to their knowledge of the articles in Arabic. Here are some examples from the subcategories C-1 and C-2 in which the subjects have done well.

Subcategory C-1 (countable singular/plural nouns):

- 1-a: The students are active today;
- 1-b: The Students sitting at the back usually work hard;
- 1-c: The dog that belongs to Jim eats meat;
- 1-d: The Library workers are helpful;
- 1-e: The library worker you know is helpful.

Subcategory C-2 (Uncountable nouns):

2-a: The coffee which you prepared is good;

2-b: The milk in the refrigerator is spoiled;

2-c: The food which has been cooked by Jane tastes bad;

2-d: The tea on the table is spilled.

In the category B, the subjects completely have failed to choose and put the right article where they are required. They, in fact, could not distinguish the nouns which need or do not need the indefinite article, a (an). They have actually misused the definite article, the and the indefinite, a (an) together. They have put the definite article the where it is not needed at all. They have also put the indefinite article a (an) where it is not required. For example, in the subcategory B-4 (Prepositional phrases), they have put indefinite article, a in front of the following words, noun such as work, church, school. Quirk et al. (1985), emphasize that the object of these two verbs go, turn, has zero article. They add that verbs like go with prepositions have zero article.

4-a: He goes to a work;

4-b: He goes to a church;

4-c: He goes to a school.

Also, in the following subcategory B-3 (familiar nouns), the subjects have put the definite article the in sentences (3-a) and (3-b) before the familiar nouns, such as meals which do not require articles. They require only zero articles (Lane 1981, and Quirk et al. 1985). For example:

Subcategory B-3 (Familiar nouns):

3-a: I am going to have the lunch.

3-b: I did not have the breakfast.

Moreover, in the subcategory B-2 (countable nouns), they have misused the definite article the because they do not know the distinction between the specific and the generic. Therefore, they have put the definite article the before the nouns instead of zero article in sentences (2a), (2b), (2c) and (2d):

Subcategory B-2 (countable nouns),e.g.:

2-a: The students usually work hard.

2-b: The teachers receive high salaries.

2-c: The computers are available.

2-d: The Day Care Centers do not benefit the children.

In addition the subcategory B-1 (non countable nouns, abstract or mass and physical substances or nouns), according to the presented test, does not require the definite article the or the indefinite article a, an. But, the informants have not recognized that these nouns do not need the articles the or a (an). They have just filled in all the blanks in sentences (1-a), (1-b), (1-c) and (1-d) with the definite article the, instead of the zero article:

Subcategory B-1 (proper nouns):

1-a: The Great Britain lost its colonies.

1-b: The Tahmar University is famous

1-c: The Europe is a good place to visit.

1-d: The mount Everest is a good place to climb.

Moreover, they have made the same errors with physical substances or nouns. They have put the definite article the in sentences (1-a), (1-b), and (1-c) instead the zero article: subcategory B-1 (Physical nouns). For example:

1-a: The Mars is probably supplied by the materials of combination of the magnesium, the iron, and the sulfur.

1-b: Cars are made of the iron.

1-c: The Calcium is useful for the bones.

Furthermore, the subjects show errors with abstract or mass nouns in sentences (1-a), (1-b), (1-c), (1-d), (1-e), (1-f), (1-g), and (1-h), which do not need the articles the, a (an), zero. In fact they have used the definite article instead of the zero article (subcategory B-1 (Abstract or mass nouns):

1-a: The freedom is good;

1-b: Everyone looks for the health the happiness;

1-c: The enthusiasm is a good habit;

1-d: The milk is good for health;

1-e: Would you like the tea or the coffee;

1-f: After the lunch, they will leave for Sana'a;

1-g: Without the food the life becomes impossible;

1-h: The water consists of the oxygen and the hydrogen.

As for the category A-1 (Countable singular nouns), the subjects here have not done well. I expected that they might have had an idea about countable singular nouns. But, in fact, they have made a lot of errors in the category A-1. However, I expected they will understand the usages with the indefinite article a(an) more quickly than those with the definite article the. Here are some examples of errors which the subjects have made in this category A-1:

1-a: The Thamar University is a good institution to learn in.

1-b: He is clever student.

1.-c: The boy has cold.

Table (48): Pre-test frequent errors description and their percentages

Type of Errors of Pre-test	Number of Errors	Percentage of Errors
The	20	80%
A	21	84%
An	13	86.6%
Ø	23	92%
Total	77	85%

In the pre-test, the subjects have made a lot of errors, especially in the subcategory B. Therefore, Table (48) is designed in order to give a complete summary of the errors that subjects have made. The percentage of the errors here is 85.5%. This means that the percentage of success is just 14.5%.

THE RESULTING ANALYSIS OF THE POST-TEST

Four weeks later, the post-test was administered to the informants. In this test, the subjects seem to have mastered most of the points which are found in the pre- and post- test. In the subcategory C-2 (Uncountable nouns), the subjects seem to recognize the uncountable nouns. They have put the definite article the where it is required.

Subcategory C-2 (Uncountable nouns), e.g.:

2-a: The food in the refrigerator is spoiled.

2-b: The tea which my mom bought is very good.

2-c: The coffee on the table is spilled.

Also, in the subcategory C-1 (Countable nouns), the subjects have done very well. But, I am not sure that they have done in this subcategory very well because the influence of the Arabic language is found here. The L2 learners use the knowledge of their mother tongues in order to perceive the rules well (Ellis 1985).

Subcategory C-1 (countable nouns), e.g.:

1-a: The students are active today.

1-b: The student usually works hard.

1-c: The dog eats the meat.

1-d: The person whom you speak to is my father.

In the subcategory B-4 (Prepositional phrases) and subcategory B-3 (Familiar nouns), the subjects have done extremely well. They have understood them very well. Since we see each other at the Department of English, I encourage them to talk in English. I find that they are extremely good in these two subcategories. Here are some examples used by them.

Subcategory B-3 (Familiar Nouns), e.g.:

3-a: I did not have breakfast.

3-b: I am living in Yemen.

3-c: I have to have lunch.

Subcategory B-4 (Prepositional Phrases), e.g.:

4-a: He goes to work.

4-b: He goes to school.

In the subcategory B-2 (Countable Proper Nouns), the subjects have not really understood them very well. They have put the definite article the where it is not required at all.

Subcategory B-2 (Countable Proper Nouns), e.g.:

2-a: The students usually work hard.

2-b: The teachers spend one quarter of their lives in the classroom.

2-c: The computers are available nowadays.

2-d: The doctors receive good salaries.

2-e: The nurses work hard.

Also, with the subcategory B-1 (Uncountable Nouns), the subjects have been confused. They have put the article the where it is not required.

Subcategory B-1 (Uncountable Nouns)

1-a: The Great Britain lost its colonies.

1-b: The mount Everest is a good place to climb.

1-c: The Europe is a good place to visit.

1-d: The Thamar University has many buildings.

1-e: She bought two kinds of the sugar.

1-f: The milk is good for health.

1-g: Everyone looks for the health and the happiness.

As for subcategory A-1 (Countable singular nouns), I expected the informants to do very well for two reasons. The first reason is that

they may have got an idea from the pre-test and the second reason is that they may have learnt the definite article a (an) at level one and level two, English Language Department. If they had not learnt the indefinite article at the first and the second levels, they might have learned it at least through reading that has been done in class. They have, in fact, put the indefinite article where it is required. They have just misused three points. In other words, they have not put or they have put the indefinite article a (an) where it is not needed.

Subcategory A-1 (Countable singular nouns), e.g.:

1-a: He is clever student.

1-b: An Ebb City is a large.

I guess, they have not paid attention to these two examples. Their performance with reference to other examples of post-test is good.

Table (49): Post-test frequent errors description and their percentages

Type of Errors of Post-test	Number of Errors	Percentage of Errors
The	8	32%
A	9	36%
An	3	20%
Ø	10	40%
Total	30	33%

Figure (4): A Comparison of Errors Made in Pre- and Post- Test



In the post-test, the learners have done very well. Thus Table (49) is designed to give a clear idea about what they have done in this post-test. The informants' errors diminish remarkably. Table (49) actually contrasts with Table (48). The percentage of errors in Table (48) is about 85.5% while in Table (49) it is about 33%. This means that the subjects have improved a lot in the use of the English Articles the, a (an), and (zero).

CONCLUSION

In the pre- and post- tests, the subjects did not use uncountable nouns (Physical and abstract or mass nouns) which need or do not need the article, e.g. Milk is expensive, The milk in the refrigerator is spoiled. Therefore, the number of errors, which the learners have made in the post-test, is much lower than that of the pre-test. Also, they have never

used the nouns that need the indefinite article an. They have just used the indefinite article a in both the pre and post written tests.

In the tests, the subjects were required to fill in the blanks with the right answer. Therefore, their errors, especially in the pre-test, are numerous. But in the post-test, those errors have become less (see Table (48), Table (49), and Figure (4)). In addition, the subjects have avoided the nouns which make them confused and commit errors in their writing. In her study on the English relative clause, Schachter (1974) emphasizes that Arab and Persian students whose mother tongues have English-like relative clause have produced more errors than those errors yielded by the Chinese and the Japanese students whose mother tongues have no relative clause.

In general, the informants have understood use of the English articles to some extent. The result of the pre and post-tests confirm that the subjects have overcome some difficulties found in the use of the English articles. Consequently, the intensive English programme, which the learners have been taking and the environment in which they learn, is helpful to them to overcome the difficulties which they always face in the use of the English articles.

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Appendix-1

Test of the English Articles:

Name/

Level/

Read the following sentences carefully and then choose the correct letter ('the' 'a' 'an' or 'zero(0)') to fill in the following blanks:

E.g. He is student.

He is a student.

1) students are active today.

a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

2) students sitting at the back usually work hard.

a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

3) dog that belong to Jim eats meat.

a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

4) library workers are helpful.

a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

5) library worker you know is helpful.

a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

6) Coffee which you prepared is good.

a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

7) milk ----- refrigerator is spoiled.

a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

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8) food which has been cooked by Jane tastes bad.

- a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

9) tea on Table is spilled.

- a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

10) He goes to work.

- a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

11) He goes to church.

- a) the b) a c) an d) zero (0)

12) He goes to school.

- a) the b) a c) an d) zero (0)

13) I am going to have lunch.

- a) the b) a c) an d) zero (0)

14) I did not have breakfast.

- a) the b) a c) an d) zero (0)

15) students usually work hard.

- a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

16) teachers receive high salaries.

- a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

17) computers are available nowadays.

- a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

18) day Care Centers do not benefit children.

- a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

19) great Britain lost its colonies.

- a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

20) Thamar Univeristy is famous.

- a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

21) Europe is good place to visit.

- a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

22) mount Everest isgood place to climb.

- a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

23) Mars is probably supplied by materials of combination of magnesium iron, and sulfur.

- a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

24) Care are made if iron.

- a) the b) a c) an d) zero (0)

25) Calcium is useful for bones.

- a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

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26) freedom is good.

- a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

27) Everyone looks for health and happiness.

- a) the b) a c) an d) zero (0)

28) enthusiasm is good habit.

- a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

29) milk is good for health.

- a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

30) Would you like tea or coffee.

- a) the b) a c) an d) zero (0)

31) After lunch, they will leave for Sana'a.

- a) the b) a c) an d) zero (0)

32) Without food life becomes impossible.

- a) the b) a c) an d) zero (0)

33) water consists of oxygen hydrogen.

- a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

34) Thamar University is a good institution to learn in.

- a) The b) A c) An d) zero (0)

35) He is clever student.

- a) the b) a c) an d) zero (0)

36) The boy has cold.

- a) the b) a c) an d) zero (0)