

A N I N V E S T I G A T I O N O F T H E
S E C O N D L A N G U A G E P R O F I C I E N C Y
O F A S E L E C T E D G R O U P O F
A F R I K A A N S - S P E A K I N G T E A C H E R S
I N T R A I N I N G A T A T R A I N I N G
C O L L E G E F O R T E A C H E R S .

(An account of an investigation into the types,
the frequency, and the sources of the errors
committed in writing an English composition by a
selected group of 100 Afrikaans-speaking students
in the first year of their training at a Transvaal
College of Education.)

by

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A T H E S I S
S U B M I T T E D I N P A R T I A L F U L F I L M E N T
O F T H E R E Q U I R E M E N T S F O R T H E D E G R E E O F
M A G I S T E R E D U C A T I O N I S
I N T H E
P O T C H E F S T R O O M U N I V E R S I T Y f o r C H R I S T I A N H I G H E R
E D U C A T I O N .

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CHAPTER I.

LEARNING AND WRITING A SECOND LANGUAGE.

A. ON THE PURPOSE AND THE NATURE OF THIS STUDY.

The purpose of this study is to determine, by the actual examination of their written work, the general level of proficiency in writing English of Afrikaans-speaking students who have successfully completed the secondary school course in English as the "B" language. The materials of this investigation are the errors committed in the written compositions of a group of 100 students in the first year of their training at a Transvaal Training College for Teachers.

The essays were written by the students soon after they had been admitted to the College and were then examined, marked, and the errors were counted and analysed, in order to determine:-

1. the types of errors committed by students in a free composition exercise;
2. the frequency of the different types of errors; and,
3. as far as possible, to account for these errors by tracing them to their sources;
4. to use the data of this investigation in order to discover what aspects of the writing of English students find most difficult and to relate these to their general level of proficiency in the second language.

This research into the nature and sources of error in written composition could be useful, not only in determining the students' ability to express themselves in the second language, but also for its diagnostic value.

It enables the lecturer to know what his students do not know yet and to discover what they still need to learn in order to attain the standard of bilingualism required of future teachers of the second language. Knowing this enables him to make provision, in his language courses, for the teaching of those skills that need perfection. It is hoped that this study will, therefore, have some practical bearing on the problems generally encountered by teachers and students of a second language in South Africa.

This brief statement of the aims and the nature of this study indicates the need for a digression.

In order to be able to find out why students of a second, or a foreign language commit errors in using this language, as well as to be able to evaluate the significance of the errors of bilinguals, it is necessary to examine, very briefly, some significant facts about the nature of language, and of bilingualism and the nature of second language learning.

B. LEARNING A SECOND LANGUAGE - PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES.

In view of the scope of this subject and of the truly enormous literature on the subject of second language learning and teaching, only such aspects have been selected as were considered relevant to the subject of this dissertation.

1. THE NATURE OF LANGUAGE.

"Language is more than a means of conveying thoughts and feelings from one person to another; it is also an instrument of thought, the means whereby we understand not only what others have written, but also what we ourselves are thinking and feeling within ourselves. As a result our powers of thinking consciously and feeling consciously are, to a great extent, limited by our ability to classify and put into words our own thoughts and feelings" ⁽¹⁾

Sapir says that..... "taal als structuur beschouwd is in haar inwendige gedaante de gietvorm van de gedagte"⁽²⁾

If language is "de gietvorm van de gedagte" and "an instrument of thought", it not only reflects the world and our thinking about it. It is a practical approach to the world for the purpose of acting upon it: it "mediates between man and his environment (and, therefore) semantic structure and social structure are intimately connected, and it is here that the most serious difficulties for the language learner are probably to be found. A language is not only part of the cultural achievement of a people, it also transmits the rest of their culture system." ⁽³⁾

(1) I.A.A.M.: The Teaching of English in Secondary Schools. p.26.

(2) Sapir, E. Wat is Taal. (Dutch Translation) p.23.

(3) Abercrombie, D: The Social Basis of Language, in E.L.T., vol. III, No.1., Sept., 1948., p.7.

Charles Fries states that: "Our language is an essential part of every portion of our experience; it gets all its meaning from our experience, and it is in turn our tool to grasp and realise experience." (4)

Since, "in language as used day by day, meanings are intimately connected with each other; they are held together by the attitudes, the customs, the habits and the conduct of the community whose language it is," (5) it is clear that the student's native language, in its full meaning as a socio-cultural phenomenon, must enter into any effort of his to acquire a second set of linguistic symbols with which to interpret his socio-cultural behaviour. The problem of the student of a second language is that while some of its symbols may have meanings that are familiar to him, others refer to experiences that are relatively or entirely unfamiliar to him; others, again, are quite unknown in the mother tongue.

H.A. Gleason distinguishes between the expression structure and the content structure of language. These two structures "are intimately related and inter-acting. Parts of the structure of expression are associated in definite ways with parts of the structure of content. The relations between these two complex structures are themselves quite complex. In every language they are different from what is found in every other language. The differences may be profound and extensive or they may be relatively slight. But in every instance the two structures are intricate and their relationships quite characteristic." (6)

This "characteristic" nature of these relationships is largely responsible for the learning difficulties of non-native students of a language.

2. WHAT IS LANGUAGE ABILITY?

Bloch and Trager assert that "Everyone who is not deaf or idiotic has fully mastered his native language by the end of his fifth year." (7) The child has, therefore, by the time he is compelled to study a second language,

(4) Fries, C.C. Teaching and Learning English, p.57.

(5) Abercrombie, D: op. cit. p.30.

(6) Gleason, H.A.: An Introduction to Descriptive Linguistics, pp.2-3. (cf. also: Gleason: ibid pp.2-9 & pp.12-13.)

(7) Bloch and Trager: Outline of Linguistic Analysis, p.7. cf. also: Fries Teaching and Learning English, etc., p.4.

already acquired a set of habits regarding the sounds, structural devices, and a part of the vocabulary of his home-language which enable him to handle it with unconscious ease. Not that this "just happens";⁽⁸⁾ it is the outcome of "a habit-forming process.....(as) proficiency in the use of a language can only come as a result of perfectly formed habits." ⁽⁹⁾

(This view of language learning as a "habit-forming process" is supported by most writers on language and the study of language, and may be regarded as the most fundamental assumption underlying the vast superstructure of language learning methodology).⁽¹⁰⁾

Language ability is a "constantly developing mastery"⁽¹¹⁾, its growth lasts a life-time and at any stage "any individual's knowledge of a language is represented by one of the points as he moves along (a) continuum towards the final point of 'complete mastery of the language.' Actually this last point is at infinity and is never reached, for no-one ever attains 'complete mastery of a language', even of his own." ⁽¹²⁾

Dr. E.G. Malherbe, writing on "The Bilingual School", also states: "I prefer to look upon language ability as a continuum which varies all the way from a possible zero ability in that function (or functions) to the ideal 100 percent. It is all a question of degree....(and) failure to distinguish these grades or degrees of bilingualism leads (as it has done in the past) to confusion in thought....." ⁽¹³⁾

These last two statements on the nature of language ability both recognise the unattainability of the ideal of "complete mastery" of a language, while the growth of language proficiency is seen as a progression along a "continuum" towards an ultimate aim.

(8) Jespersen, O.: Language, Its Nature, Development and Origin, p.130 ff.

(9) Palmer, H.W.: The Principles of Language Study, p.17.

(10) Cf. Palmer: *ibid* p.98., Fries C.C.: *op.cit.* p.2; West, M: Language in Education, p.50; T.E.D.: English Speech Exercises for Afrikaans Medium Schools, p.45.; etc.

(11) Fries, C.C.: *op.cit.* p.3.

(12) Agard & Dunkel: An Investigation of Second-Language Teaching, p.25.

(13) Malherbe, E.G.: The Bilingual School, p.28.

It is, therefore, necessary to define the ideal and to plot the points we want the student to attain at any given stage of his growth, or development, towards the ideal of language mastery, or of bilingualism. Definitions of this ideal (ultimate aim) are usually given in the syllabuses of second-language courses,⁽¹⁴⁾ while the teacher, in drawing up his schemes of work, plots the "points" for his class.⁽¹⁵⁾

"Knowing a language means being able to read it, write it, speak it, and understand it when spoken. These are four distinct and separate activities.....though they are so closely interwoven for the normal individual that he finds it difficult to think or talk about any one of them without invoking the rest." ⁽¹⁶⁾

We have to distinguish between receptive ("passive") and productive ("active") mastery of a language. The two skills of understanding and reading a language are generally regarded as the passive, or receptive phases of language learning, while the ability to speak and write a language are regarded as the active, or productive (expressive), phases of language proficiency. Language mastery should, however, be regarded as a unified and integrated four-fold skill of understanding, reading, speaking, and writing the language.

From the point of view of the teacher: "The basic central skill with which the teacher of a second language is concerned, is an adequate mastery of:

- (a) the expression structure
- (b) the content structure, and
- (c) a sufficient part of the vocabulary of the target language." ⁽¹⁷⁾

The student can be said to have mastered the second language when he has "within a limited vocabulary mastered the sound system (that is when he can understand the stream of speech and achieve an understandable production

(14) cf. (a) T.E.D.: Suggested Syllabuses for the Primary School, p.37.

(b) Cape of Good Hope: Onderwysgaset 18/11/48, p.1759, - English as a Second Language - General Remarks.

(15) cf. T.E.D.: English Exercises for Afrikaans Medium Schools (Grades - Std.VIII) (Here the "continuum" of growth or development has been plotted in terms of the 'structural patterns' that have to be taught)

(16) Abercrombie, D: Problems and Principles, p.16.

(17) Venter, J.A.: Descriptive Linguistics and Second-Language Teaching, p.15.

of it) and has, second, made the structural devices (that is, the basic arrangements of utterances) matters of automatic habit." (18)

What, according to investigators in the fields of foreign and second-language learning, do students find difficult about the mastery of a second language? A study of the findings of research conducted both overseas and in our own country, should provide a hypothetical answer to this question.

C. HOME LANGUAGE VS. SECOND LANGUAGE.

1. What conditions obtain when two languages are brought into contact with each other, as they are in the mind of the student who has to learn a second language? This problem is perhaps best defined by E. Haugen, when he states that: "another language learned either simultaneously" (with the home language), "or later, duplicates in many ways the functions of the former and involves the alternative use of the same mental and physical organs. The primary linguistic problem is therefore that of keeping the two languages apart." (19)

The language habits of the second language have to be acquired against the background of the older and more firmly fixed habits of the mother-tongue, and "the practical teacher is forced to admit that he cannot eliminate the student's mother-tongue, if only because the student himself cannot dispense with it; he is using it subconsciously far more than is generally realised,.....(since) our pure concepts are strangely tied to the vernacular and the order of expression and its nature are conditioned by it. It is quite useless to attempt to shut out the native language". (20)

It is doubtful whether the student, if he reaches a stage where he is capable of "thinking" in the second language, can do so to the complete exclusion of the mother-tongue and, therefore, in absolute freedom from its unconscious interference. The nature and the extent of home-language interference will be reflected in his attempts to use the second language productively in speaking and

(18) Fries, C.C.: op. cit., p.3.

(19) Haugen, E.: Bilingualism in the Americas, p.7.

(20) Allen, W.S.: In Defence of the Use of the Vernacular and Translating in Class, in E.L.L., Vol. III, No.2., 1948.

writing, and will, if investigated scientifically, provide a valuable index to areas of potential and actual interference and, therefore, of learning difficulty.

Since the student in his progress along the "continuum" of growth towards the ultimate aim of maximal bilingualism, is subjected to linguistic interference which may not only impede his progress, but at times may be strong enough to render him inarticulate in the second language, this interference has to be considered as very important. In fact, Prof. Weinreich claims that: "great or small the differences and similarities between the languages in contact must be exhaustively stated for every domain - phonic, grammatical, and lexical - as a prerequisite to an analysis of interference(and) should probably include, among others, a picture of the degree of 'a priori' structural homogeneity of the languages in contact and the precedents for borrowing in each." (21)

The errors committed by Afrikaans-speaking students of English as a second language should also be studied scientifically, as suggested above, and if possible traced to their sources in order to determine the extent and the nature of home language interference. It is important that we make "error counts", in order to discover the types of errors committed by students, but it is even more important to discover why they make these mistakes. The answer to this question is, I believe, to be found in a scientific comparison of the ^{languages} two in order to discover "to what extent interference is determined by the structure of the two languages in contact as against non-linguistic factors in the socio-cultural context of the languages in contact." (22)

Interference may be defined as the re-arrangement of patterns that results from the introduction of "foreign" elements, i.e. elements of the native language, into the structure of the second language, its phonemic system, its morphology and its syntax. Since the materials of the present investigation are the compositions written by matriculated students on entering an institution for higher education, we shall leave aside interference in the phonemic systems of the two languages.

(21) Weinreich, U.: Languages in Contact., p.2.

(22) Weinreich,: op. cit., p.4.

(Teachers of English as a second language know how poorly students sometimes pronounce the English phonemes and how much trouble they have with pronunciation in the second language.)

It is clear, from the above statements, that the student of a second language experiences opposition from the firmly imbedded language habits of his mother tongue when attempting to master the new language. The extent and the seriousness of these inhibitory influences deserve to be examined more closely, with special reference to the two languages in contact in South Africa.

D. LANGUAGES IN CONTACT IN SOUTH AFRICA.

i. (i) THE SOCIO-LINGUISTIC ENVIRONMENT.

In Prof. Uriel Weinreich's study, "Languages in Contact", this eminently qualified linguist considers, at the hand of the large number of European languages he knows, what happens when two languages are brought into contact with each other, and succeeds in pointing out examples of interference in all European languages that have existed side by side, though not even in such close contact as the two official languages of our own country. In South Africa a similar study was undertaken in 1937 by Dr. H.J. Rousseau to show the influence of English on Afrikaans. These "anglismes" are carefully examined with regard to their origin and range of distribution and a great many examples are given of the influence of English on the vocabulary, as well as on the structure (phonemic, morphological, and syntactic) of Afrikaans. He lays down an important rule for inter-lingual interference:

"Hoe gebruikliker 'n taaleenheid is, hoe meer word hy deur sy eie taal assimileer, en hoe sterker is sy invloed sowel in sy eie as op ander tale....Wat Eng. invloed op Afr. betref, moet ons dus nagaan hoe gebruiklik 'n bepaalde eenheid in S.-Afrik. Eng. is, en hoe gebruiklik die ooreenstemmende eenheid in Afr. is.....Uitgaande van die beginsel, kan ons vooruit sê dat die Eng. invloed op die allergebruiklikste taaleenhede in Afr. - die klanke en grammatika - betreklik beperk in omvang sal wees". (23)

For evidence of the continued influence of English on Afrikaans, we need only refer to the battle waged against "Anglismes" in the classroom of the Afrikaans, home-language, teacher. But, while English influence on

(23) Rousseau, H.J.: Die Invloed van Engels op Afrikaans, p. 102.

Afrikaans is labelled as "anglisme", very little attention has as yet been paid to the Afrikaans origin of the errors committed by Afrikaans-speaking bilinguals. In the classroom these are simply regarded as errors and as such are corrected, without much attention to their origin, and to the possibility that they may derive from interlingual interference. The inevitable result is that certain types of errors keep on recurring. These errors represent areas of learning difficulty and should be studied scientifically for the data they may yield and with a view to devising ways and means of forestalling them.

(ii) PURISM, OR LANGUAGE SEPARATISM IN SOUTH AFRICA.

The position at present in South Africa may be described as one of purism or intolerance of linguistic interference. Since the proclamation of Afrikaans as official language, there has been a growing tendency away from fusion. The compilation of lists of Afrikaans terms for practically every branch of our national activity - industrial, commercial, technical, etc., has been a strong influence in maintaining the purity of Afrikaans and in enhancing its expressiveness as a language. The rise of Afrikaans has brought about an increasing facility in conducting the business of living in the native language. Though this is perhaps not detrimental to the growth of bilingualism after the school-leaving age, it has removed from the classroom the incentive to the learning of English as a short term policy and has, according to one writer, Dr. E.G. Malherbe, slowed down "the rate of increase in bilingualism."⁽²⁴⁾ The mother tongue school, church, press and radio have assuredly made an important contribution towards the present-day situation, by checking the tendency towards fusion and uninhibited borrowing from English into Afrikaans.

(iii) GROUP ATTITUDES.

Also, the language groups in the bilingual society themselves supply some of the extra-linguistic factors through their attitudes towards culture, bilingualism, tolerance or intolerance with regard to the practice of mixing languages and incorrect speech in either language,

~~with the relations between the white and the coloured group and~~
(24) Malherbe, E.G.: op. cit p.1.

as well as the relations between the bilingual group and each of the two language communities of which it forms a part. (25)

The factors that make a language dominant are frequently determined by the society the bilingual lives in and the usefulness of the language as a means of social advancement. Conservative, standardising forces, e.g. the school, may check the freedom of speech behaviour by supporting the norms of the language against unchecked foreign influence.

(iv) INDIVIDUAL ATTITUDES.

Another extra-linguistic factor which influences the speech of bilinguals is the individual himself. Since the study of individual differences belongs to the field of study of exo-linguistics, a branch of the science of linguistics, only a few of these differences will be mentioned here:

- (a) The speaker's facility of verbal expression and his ability to keep the two languages apart.
- (b) His level of general proficiency in each language. Rousseau noticed that bilingual speakers who have not made a careful study of their native language more often resort to the aid of the "other" language in expressing themselves. (26)
- (c) Specialization in the use of either language. "Many bilinguals are accustomed to discuss some topics in only one of their languages, or to use only one language on given occasions; a sudden transition to the other language opens the door to interference." (27)
- (d) The attitude of the student towards each language - whether idiosyncratic or stereotyped.

25. Cf. Malherbe: op. cit., Introduction, pp. 3-15;
and Rousseau: op. cit., Chapter II.

26. Cf. Rousseau: op. cit., p.5.

27. Weinreich: op. cit., p.81.

- (e) The manner of learning each language. The student who has studied one of the two languages more carefully, while he has "picked up" the other from friends, will perpetuate their errors in his speech in that language. He may speak the language he has studied more correctly and interference is more likely to derive from this than from the other language.

2. LINGUISTIC INTERFERENCE.

In linguistic interference the problem of major interest is that of the interplay of structural and non-structural factors that promote or impede this process. "The structural factors are those which stem from the organisation of linguistic forms into a definite system, different for every language, and to a considerable degree independent of non-linguistic experience and behaviour... In as much as a language is a system of oppositions, a partial identification of the systems (including the grammatical and semantic systems) is to the bilingual a reduction of his linguistic burden. And it is these natural identifications that are at the root of many forms of interference." (28)

(i) PHONEMIC INTERFERENCE.

By this is meant the transfer of speech sounds, e.g. of the Afrikaans (p) phoneme to English and other "mispronunciations" of English phonemes. (29) In the classroom there may even be a double interference: the teacher partly or fully substituting his phone for that of English, and the unilingual listener (the student) interpreting the substituted sound in terms of his primary phoneme. "As a matter of fact," says Weinreich, "it requires a relatively high degree of cultural sophistication in both languages for a speaker to afford the luxury of maintaining separate sub-phonemic habits in each." (30)

28. Weinreich: op. cit., p.5-6; also Rousseau: op. cit., pp. 110-112.

29. Cf. Rousseau: op. cit., pp. 132-164, for further examples.

30. Weinreich: op. cit., p.6.

(ii) LEXICAL INTERFERENCE:

An interesting example of lexical interference which resulted in lexical borrowing in Afrikaans is the recognition and acceptance of the English word taxi into Afrikaans and the subsequent battle for the retention of its English pronunciation vs. an Afrikaansified pronunciation.

Some "parts of speech" are more amenable to transfer; it seems that the simpler their grammatical functions, the more easily they are transferable, e.g. freely occurring nouns; while auxiliary verbs are less readily transferable than verbs. [It is to be doubted whether the verb, "to taxi", will ever be borrowed into Afrikaans, and if so, whether it can retain its morphological forms.] Idiomatic constructions, though often taken over (they form the bulk of the "anglismes" of Afrikaans), result in the contamination of the language into which they are transferred, though they may add spice to it. Most of these, however, belong to sub-standard usage and are not admitted to the cultured forms of the language. (31)

(iii) GRAMMATICAL INTERFERENCE:

Interference in grammatical relations is responsible for such errors as the disregard by Afrikaans-speaking bilinguals of the rules for agreement and dependence in English. Such errors constitute a violation of the syntax and idiom of the language, but are easily overlooked by students in learning the language; since they do not always result in unintelligibility of the utterance. (32)

Entire grammatical categories of the two languages may be identified because of a similarity in function. The outstanding example of this type of interference is the identification of the tense systems of English and Afrikaans by Afrikaans-speaking students of English. The Present Perfect tense of English is quite readily identified with the Afrikaans Past Indefinite tense owing to what appears, to the Afrikaans-speaking student, to be a similarity in use between the two tenses.

31. Cf. Rousseau: op. cit., pp. 179-199.

32. Cf. Rousseau: op. cit., pp. 199-202.

Neglecting to use the double negative of Afrikaans by Afrikaans-speaking people may be quoted as an example of the extension of the function of a morpheme to develop a new paradigm of obligatory categories on the model of another language. In one of the dissertations studied in the course of this investigation, the investigator, though he was Afrikaans-speaking and wrote in Afrikaans, consistently used "was" instead of "is", e.g. "nadat die skrifte nagesien was" - (an attempt to supply a grammatical category of Past Perfect tense usage which does not exist in Afrikaans.)

Much more interference occurs in the speech of bilinguals than will ever be recorded in print owing to conventional attitudes and psychological factors which resist a too free interference.

(iv) "TRANSLATION".

By "translation" is meant the behaviour of the bilingual speaker or writer who, in actively using the second language, has to express himself via his mother-tongue, owing to an inability to form a direct association between the object and its referent symbol in the second language. (33)

In the case of the less proficient bilingual this may amount to a complete shift of language within the same utterance; i.e. he may pass from a correct structure in one part of the utterance to something so incompatibly wrong in the other part of it that it may be regarded as a complete collapse of the distinction between the two languages. This is perhaps best explained by Prof. Haugen, who states that: "speakers have not been observed to draw freely from two languages at once, aside from abnormal cases. They may switch rapidly from one to the other, but at any given moment they are speaking only one, even when they resort to the other for assistance." (34)

It appears from the Afrikaans meanings, so readily given by pupils when asked for the meaning of an English word, that they actually continue to think in Afrikaans and understand English by a process of indirect association, via the Afrikaans "equivalents" of the English words.

33. Cf. Rousseau: op. cit., pp. 16-17.

34. Haugen, E.: The Norwegian Language in America, p.362.

The English structural and semantic signals are straight-away translated into Afrikaans and so understood. In the productive language activities of speaking and writing this process is reversed, and it is done mainly, if not wholly, in the mother tongue, so that speaking and writing of the second language in reality become acts of translation.

(v) CONFUSION OF THE TWO LANGUAGES.

It seems that once one language has given way to the other, that one forces itself upon the speaker, or writer with the full impact of its grammatical and lexical structure, blinding him to the structural peculiarities of the language he is at that moment using. That is why even proficient bilingual speakers very often have great difficulty in finding 'the right word', since "for each idea the bilingual's multiple concurrent word associations interfere with each other, especially in the expressive uses of language (i.e. speaking and writing). It follows that bilingualism is an obstacle to ideation. Particular embarrassment is caused by the use of the uncusomary language in a given domain, or in talking to a person with whom another language was used previously". (35)

(vi) CULTURAL DIFFUSION.

Borrowing from one language into another is, according to prof. Haugen, an example of cultural diffusion, i.e. of the spread of an item of culture from one people to another. It is, moreover, "something that has happened wherever there have been bilinguals. It is, in fact, unthinkable without the existence of bilinguals, and apparently inevitable where there is any considerable group of bilinguals." (36)

This process of acculturation, or cultural orientation, is one of the subtlest aspects of language study. It means more than a mere knowledge of the language categories, its structural, phonemic, and lexical items. It is "an invisible network of distinctions and congruences which the categories of the new language itself impose on his (the speaker's) universe of experience.

35. Weinreich: op. cit., p.71.

36. Haugen: op. cit.: Vol. II, p. 362.

This is what (is) ordinarily meant by 'learning to think' in a new language. But every time he 'thinks' in it, he (is) practically required to use patterns that differ from those of his native speech." (37) He continues to explain that, in all probability, "we may even suspect that the true originators of that curious patchwork which is modern English, were the servants of the Norman-French nobles..... When their masters gave up French, the English they learned and eventually made into the cultured tongue of the land, was the speech they had acquired in the nurseries from their own servants." (38)

(Research into the origin of Afrikaans may perhaps bring to light similar influences in the development of this language, - c.f. the influence of the language of the Cape Malays, etc.) (39)

3. COMPARATIVE LANGUAGE STUDY AS A POSSIBLE SOLUTION TO PROBLEMS OF LINGUISTIC INTERFERENCE.

"As yet", says Dr. J.A. Venter, "we know all too little about the way in which the individual learns a foreign language. What progress in language teaching there has been in the past two or three decades has resulted mainly from our sharpened insight into the nature of language and linguistic structure." (40)

Most aspects of language teaching have, in the course of time, been considered by authorities on the subject, and various methods of teaching "another " language to monoglots have been devised and worked out in great detail. This has led to the adoption of methods variously known and described as, e.g. "direct" methods, "oral" methods, or "aural-oral" (lately called audio-lingual) methods, and various formulae have been worked out in connection with the selection and grading of language matter and methods of presentation, e.g. "Basic English", the "sen-sit" ("sentence in a situation" - I.A. Richards), and the "mimicry-memorization" formulae.

37. Haugen: op. cit., p. Vol. II, p. 370.

38. Haugen: ibid., p. 370-371.

39. Cf. Rousseau: op. cit., pp. 120-134.

40. Venter, J.A.: op. cit. (1). p. 21.

In South Africa, Departments of Education have from time to time found it necessary to revise their English, Second Language, syllabuses and different investigators have made suggestions in connection with the method and content of second-language courses. Following H. Palmer's division of language matter into "primary" and "secondary" matter, Dr. I.v.H. Fourie suggested a basis of classification of language matter, and proposed that this should be done within the framework of the "Basic English" vocabulary. (41) L.J. Loock expressed the view: "myns insiens het die tyd aangebreek dat lees en grammatika boeke aan die hand van opgestelde woord en idioom frekwensielyste opgestel word". (42)

One fact inherent in the nature of the process of learning a second language has perhaps been overlooked. This has happened in spite of the fact that writers on the subject of foreign language learning realise that it constitutes a very different task from that of learning the first language. No allowance has been made for the fact that "the basic problems arise, not out of any essential difficulty in the features of the new language themselves, but primarily out of the special set created by the first language habits," (43) i.e. they derive from linguistic interference.

Prof. Robert Lado of the English Language Institute, University of Michigan, was one of the first to explore scientifically the problems presented by home language interference. In this investigation his point of departure is "that we can predict and describe the patterns that will cause difficulty in learning, and those that will not cause difficulty, by comparing systematically the language and culture to be learned with the native language and culture of the student." (44)

I am not suggesting that a comparative analysis of the languages in contact in South Africa will present a solution to the problems of second language teachers and students. Language learning is far too complex a process to allow of such oversimplification.

41. Cf. Fourie: Fundamentals of Second Language Teaching, pp. 22-28.

42. Loock, L.J.: Die Onderwys van Engels as Tweede Taal..., p. 101.

43. Fries, C.C.: Foreword to "Linguistics Across Cultures (R. Lado), p.i.

44. Lado, R.: Linguistics Across Cultures, Preface, p. vii. Cf. also Weinreich: op. cit., p.14.

We cannot deny "that individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings of their native language to the foreign language and culture - both productively when attempting to speak the language and to act in the culture and receptively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and culture as practiced by natives." (45)

Therefore, a full comparison of the two languages in contact in the mind of the student could yield a hypothetical list of problems and areas of interference, and therefore of learning difficulty. Any such list will, of course, remain a hypothetical, though not for that reason a less useful list, until final validation has been achieved by checking it against the actual speech and written expression of the student.

It is in order to find out more about the extent and the nature of linguistic interference that I have undertaken yet another "error-count". It may indicate the need for a comparative study of English and Afrikaans of the scope suggested by Prof. Lado, or it may disprove many of the 'a priori' statements on the importance of linguistic interference in second language learning.

4. S U M M A R Y.

If what has been said above about language and bilingual behaviour is true, the following important facts may now be stated:-

- (1) Language is intimately related to the socio-cultural experiences of the community - The German adage, "Man liebt in seiner spräche," is indeed true, and equally true are Ben Jonson's famous words: "Language most shows a man, speak that I may see thee."
- (2) The learner of a second language is subject to the conditions found by various investigators (notably Rousseau, Weinreich and Haugen) to obtain in bilingual communities. The school as a "microcosm" of society will reflect these conditions. The pupils will unconsciously, especially in "free" expression in speech and writing, behave linguistically in the same way as adult bilinguals do. Free expression in the second language will, therefore, be subject to the influence of the mother-tongue of the student.

45. Lado, R.: op. cit., p.2. Cf. also Fries: op. cit., ch. 1.

- (3) Complete bilingualism is, perhaps, an unattainable ideal, but its growth may be defined in terms that leave no uncertainty as to the level of bilingualism the educationist intends his students to attain.
- (4) This process of mastering the second language is best represented as a "continuum", and the individual's progress towards the ultimate aim of bilingualism by a series of points along this line of progression.
- (5) "Free" expression in speech and writing, i.e. the productive (active) use of the new language, will reflect the progress of the student along this line of development and should show: (a) an increase in the facility with which the phonemic, structural, and semantic devices and the vocabulary of the second language are used, and (b) decreasing interference of the structural, phonemic, and vocabulary elements of the native language of the student.
- (6) The above five points emphasise the need for an extensive, scientific investigation of the various aspects of linguistic interference in South Africa where English and Afrikaans are, alternately, the second languages of the two major language groups, and the two official languages of all its citizens. It is hoped that this study will make some contribution towards such an investigation by discovering the reasons for the errors committed by students in writing English as a second language. An analysis of these errors should indicate the extent to which the students have succeeded in overcoming the interference of their native language by the time they have completed a high school course in English.

E. WRITING A FOREIGN OR SECOND LANGUAGE.

"Language is primarily speech," says Homberger. (46)
"Writing is not language, but merely a way of recording language by means of visible marks". (47)
"Many linguists consider all forms of writing entirely

46. Homberger, C.P.: "How to study a Language", L.L., Vol. III, 1950, p.120.

47. Bloomfield, L.: Language, p.21.

outside the domain of linguistics. Nevertheless, the relationships between speech and writing are intimate.... A written language is basically a representation of a spoken language. It is, however, seldom an exact reflection." (48)

The above quotations represent the views of linguists on this subject of writing down language. Yet, writing down "speech" is one of the general ultimate aims of second language teaching and perhaps receives more attention than it merits in the language classroom. Examinations in the second language are usually written by the students and even though an oral examination may also be required, it is generally the written examination that decides the issue.

The ability to write a language has been called "the acid test of literacy," and D.F. Anderson claims that "command of a language implies also the ability to reproduce correctly its sound patterns and written symbols." (49)

In writing, as in speaking the second language, the student is liable to make mistakes. These errors have been an important source of investigations into the proficiency of students in writing the language. From the errors committed by students teachers have been able to diagnose their writing difficulties and to design exercises to improve their command of this language skill. What has perhaps not always been realised, is that proficiency in writing a language can only really be improved by improving the student's proficiency in speaking the language.

Written "language" - which, according to the views expressed in the above quotations, does not exist - is "basically a representation of spoken language". I prefer to look upon it as such and to regard it as "written speech" and, therefore, I make a distinction between (a) structural, idiomatic and vocabulary errors, and (b) orthographical errors, i.e. errors of punctuation and spelling.

The structural, idiomatic and vocabulary errors derive from an inadequate mastery of the spoken language, for, "written expression is normally conceived first in

48. Gleason, H.A.: op. cit., p. 301 and 318.

49. Anderson, D.F.: A Survey of the Abilities needed in Learning English. (E.L.T., Vol. V, No.7, 1951.)

the mind in sound images and is articulated silently or aloud as it is committed to paper... This primacy of oral expression emphasizes the importance of giving a large amount of oral practice of material that is to be used later for writing." (50) If this is true, as I believe it to be, the written work of second language students will contain the kinds of errors they are liable to make in speaking the language, and will reflect the difficulties they have in speaking it.

The real difficulties of mastering written expression are..... "recall and selection of vocabulary, moulding the type of expression to suit the social situation, correct use of constructions and sentence patterns, and the logical ordering of ideas to be expressed and fitting them to the vehicles provided in the foreign language. They constitute the hard core of the problem of correct expression in a foreign language." Where learning is successful no errors occur, but where it is only partly successful, the mother-tongue habits "break through and impose themselves upon the new material. ... this leading to literal translation and the use of un-English constructions." (51)

Thus, if we leave aside the orthographical problems of the student, i.e. spelling and punctuation, his chief problems in writing the second language are those of finding the correct patterns of structure and idiom for the expression of his thoughts and suitable words with which to do it. Until he is able to do this, there can be no active proficiency in writing or in speaking the second language.

F. WRITTEN COMPOSITION IN THE SECOND LANGUAGE AS A MEANS OF MEASURING LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY.

1. WRITTEN COMPOSITION VS. THE STANDARDIZED TEST.

In spite of the fact that linguists profess to be able to test language proficiency by means of itemized, standardized tests for structure, comprehension, spelling, and even pronunciation, I agree with Bagley that "so far the only means of testing potential error in composition is to set a composition." (52)

50. Anderson, D.F.: op. cit., p.190. (Cf. Du Toit: Die Onderwys van Engels aan 'n Primêre Skool - p.91-114)

51. Anderson: op. cit., p.192-193.

52. Bagley, D.: A Critical Survey of Objective Estimates in the Teaching of English, British Journal of Educ. Psychology, Vol. IV, No.2, June, 1934, p.147.

Agard and Dunkel, after testing students exhaustively by means of standardized achievement tests, came to the conclusion that: "In writing, particularly in regard to the simple material required in this test, the student can often do fairly well by keeping within whatsoever small amount of English he knows. For general testing purposes, the objective, i.e. structure, section is probably more useful, but individual differences appear if the composition test is also used." (53)

In an attempt to test some of the qualities of active proficiency in English that cannot be tested by means of standardized tests, Ballard constructed a "jumbled sentence test" in which: "The candidate is required to organise his ideas just as he has to organise them in writing an essay..... what he is ostensibly asked to do is to arrange phrases and sentences: what he is really asked to do is to arrange the underlying thoughts." (54) What he is not asked to do, and cannot be asked to do in this test, is perhaps the most important linguistic activity: that of constructing his own sentences and arranging his own ideas with nothing to guide him except the title of the essay. This should be regarded as the supreme test of his active, or expressive, proficiency in the second language, since it requires a combination of all the skills needed in using language as a means of communication.

It seems as if the compilers of standardised tests have not succeeded in finding a satisfactory substitute for the written composition to test what Schonell calls "the expressional aspects of English, that is, the extent of the pupil's vocabulary and his ability to frame correctly a variety of sentences." (55) (The "Stanford Achievement Test," a battery of tests, is also without a test capable of testing what the written composition alone can test.).

53. Agard and Dunkel: op. cit., p.264.

54. Ballard, P.B.: The New Examiner, p. 168. (cf. also G.H. Marais who used this test in order to test what he regards as the only important rhetorical aspect of second language composition viz. "Organization." (unpublished Thesis, Chapter V. title in bibliography).

55. Schonell, F.J.: Diagnostic and Attainment Testing, p. 132.

2. SECOND-LANGUAGE COMPOSITION AS A MEASURING DEVICE.

Writing on the subject of common errors in English, Prof. F.G. French states as follows: "To many teachersthe outcome of a period devoted to composition is a foregone conclusion - too many mistakes and a burden of discouragement; too much marking which will take hours and hours; at best.....too little, if any, result on the mass of the class. No lesson should have as its inevitable result a harvest of mistakes, but that is all too often, if not always, the fruit of a period given to written composition." (56)

In spite of this gloomy view of composition in the second language, it may still be the most complete and accurate test of the student's active proficiency in English. Its usefulness is recognised by most investigators and teachers in South Africa. Dr. Van Vuuren found that: "Die meerderheid (40.8%) (of the teachers - A. de B.) is die mening toegedaan dat opstelskrywe die individu se vermoë om deur middel van korrekte en vaardige gebruik van die Engelse taal sy gedagtes skriftelik aan ander mee te deel bevorder en derhalwe ook toets. 'n Betreklike groot persentasie (19.1%) beskou opstelskrywe bloot as 'n middel tot 'n doel: Dit verskaf die nodige oefening in die toepassing van essensiële taal- en skryfreëls, soos bv. die opvolging van tye, ens....." (57)

Dr. Van Vuuren found, when he was examiner of English (Lower Grade) for the Cape of Good Hope Senior Certificate Examination, that a small number of candidates wrote well; a larger number wrote correctly but their essays lacked imaginative power, while "'n groot aantal kandidate se werk so misvorm en mismaak voorgekom het as gevolg van 'n onbeholpe taal en 'n kinderagtige inhoud dat dit 'n pynlike taak was om hul skrifte na te sien." (58)

We are forced to admit with Prof. Christophersen that, even for the bilingual speaker who has attained "native-like" proficiency in speaking the language, "to reach perfection in the writing of a foreign language is a very different and usually much more difficult matter." They lack what may be called "feeling" for

56. French, F.G.: The Teaching of English Abroad, Prt. III, p. 118.

57. J.van Vuuren, C.J.: Ons Skole en die Tweede Taal, p.53.

58. J.van Vuuren, C.J.: op. cit. p.56.

59.

the language - "a sureness with regard to what one can say and what one cannot say, which the uneducated person and the foreign learner seldom acquire." (59)

In view of the above quotations and the fact that there are some aspects of composition writing which simply defy classification and standardisation, e.g. the thought content of a composition, or its "literary merit" (Courtis), we are forced to agree with Ballard's statement that: "an essay is an intricate mental product which can be analysed in a variety of ways and yet can never be analysed completely." (60) It has to be marked by impression and impression marking is the most subjective of all forms of marking.

If we want to conform to Dr. Van Vuuren's own view on the aims of second-language composition (supported by 59.9% of the teachers to whom questionnaires were sent) we should regard composition in very much the same light as the written work of the language period, viz. as a means of practising to write the second language and of applying to this task the knowledge the student has of the language - its structure, idiom, and vocabulary. The aim of literary merit should, in my opinion, be disregarded entirely, as was done in this investigation.

3. S U M M A R Y.

The following may, therefore, now be stated:-

1. Language is speech and the written language should be looked upon as speech recorded by means of a system of visible symbols. Ability to write down speech can, therefore, only come after mastery of the ability to speak the language. Speech is primary and "the relationships between speech and writing are close and intimate" (Gleason).
2. In writing the second language the student is liable to commit two distinctive types of errors:-

59. Christophersen, P.: Some Thoughts on the Study of English as a Foreign Language, p.13 & p.18.

60. Ballard, P.B.: op. cit. p.61-62 (cf. also Sir Philip de Hartog's experiment in marking compositions and the so-called standardised scales for marking of compositions, e.g. Schonell, Hillegas, Courtis's adaptation of it, Dr. Van Vuuren's scales, etc.)

- (a) those that he makes in choosing the words with which to communicate his thoughts and in arranging these in suitable patterns, and
 - (b) those that pertain to the conventions of the writing system of the language, i.e. its spelling and the devices used for indicating stress and juncture by means of diacritical marks of punctuation.
3. The errors of type 2.(a) are made before he writes down anything and pertain to such important aspects of language as: its expression structure (i.e. the arrangement of the words in the basic structural patterns in order to convey meaning; the choice of words (vocabulary). These reflect his mastery of the content structure of the language: the appropriateness of the words and patterns chosen to convey meaning and his knowledge of the "idiom" of the language, i.e. "that sureness with regard to what one can say and what one cannot say" in a given situation.
4. As a written test of active proficiency in the use of the second language, the essay can be regarded as a true measure of the standard of proficiency attained by the writer.
5. In the second language the essay, yielding, as it generally does, "a harvest of mistakes," can hardly pretend to any literary merit, but it should be regarded as an exercise in writing the language on par with the written "language" (grammar) exercise. Thus its crop of errors should be regarded as valuable data of a diagnostic type.

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CHAPTER II.

A DISCUSSION OF SOME RELATED SOUTH AFRICAN INVESTIGATIONS INTO SECOND LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY.

A great deal of research has been done in South Africa in connection with different aspects of second-language learning and teaching. Important data have been collected on methods of teaching the second language in the primary and in the high school, on bilingualism and the bilingual school, the standardisation of language proficiency tests, as well as on various other aspects of second-language proficiency.

Of these studies I have selected five for discussion in this chapter. In each of these the errors in compositions or letters written by pupils were used as a means of assessing and evaluating their proficiency in English as a second language. The aims of these investigators naturally were different from those of the present study and their interpretation of the data also differed from my own.

Three of the investigations, those of Stander, Visser and Marks, were made before 1940: one in connection with the written compositions and letters of Std. V & VI pupils, one in secondary schools of the Orange Free State, and one in Bantu secondary schools. Between 1949 and 1956 another three were undertaken in Coloured secondary schools in the Cape Peninsula. Although these studies were undertaken in connection with home language composition, they are important because in each case about 50% of the pupils in these English medium secondary schools were Afrikaans-speaking. Of one of these studies no copy could be obtained on loan and only two will be discussed.

No similar investigation has, to my knowledge, been undertaken at an after-school level.

In the following discussion only such aspects of the above-mentioned studies as are relevant to the subject of the present investigation will be discussed. Although I may venture a criticism of some or other point here and there, I was greatly impressed by the scope of these investigations and the scientific thoroughness with which they were conducted. Every error-classification has its weaknesses and its bias in the mind of the investigator, and he has as much right to his classification as anybody else to his.

A. STANDER, F.: A STUDY OF THE ENGLISH COMPOSITION OF A GROUP OF AFRIKAANS-SPEAKING PUPILS OF HIGH SCHOOLS.

This was the first investigation of its kind to be undertaken in South Africa and investigated the error types and their frequency of occurrence in the compositions of Afrikaans-speaking pupils in different standards of the high school.

For his error classification Mr. Stander relied mainly on the error categories used by Willing and Chapman and other overseas investigators for home language composition. Initially seventeen categories were used, but these were ultimately reduced to six by re-classification.

T A B L E I.

A REPRODUCTION OF THE INITIAL CLASSIFICATION OF THE ERROR CATEGORIES USED BY F. STANDER IN HIS INVESTIGATION.

	ERROR.	TOTAL.	%.	RANKING.
1	Punctuation	3134	26.25	1
2	Spelling	1963	16.5	2
3	The Verb	1549	12.93	3
4	Adverb	110	.93	15
5	Adjective	383	.69	16
6	Pronoun	341	3.07	8
7	Noun	162	1.35	13
8	Article	236	1.99	12
9	Conjunction	32	.27	17
10	Structure	292	2.46	10
11	Order of words	308	2.59	9
12	Agreement	950	8.	5
13	Meaning	124	1.04	14
14	Vocabulary	1167	9.82	4
15	Preposition	371	3.12	7
16	Idiom	802	6.75	6
17	Africanderisms	261	2.19	11 (1)

The first six categories were responsible for 80.4% of the errors. Comparing the compositions of the different standards, he found that there was a decrease in the number of errors of all kinds, except vocabulary;

this "may be explained by the tendency on the part of the more advanced pupils to make use of a wider and more difficult vocabulary." (2)

The above seventeen categories were re-classified as follows:-

T A B L E II.

A REPRODUCTION OF THE TABLE SHOWING THE SIX ERROR-CATEGORIES INTO WHICH THE ERRORS OF TABLE I WERE RE-CLASSIFIED.

ERROR.	RANKING.	PERCENTAGE.
Punctuation	1	26.25
Grammar (verb, adv., adj., pron., noun & article)	2	21.01
Spelling	3	16.5
Sentence structure (conj. structure, order of words, agreement)	4	13.32
Idiom (Prep., idiom, & Afri- canderisms)	5	12.06
Word usage (meaning and vocabulary)	6	10.86

In Ch.V he states that if A.M. schools and A. & E. schools (dual or parallel medium) were grouped separately, the difference in the number of errors would be: 12.5 per pupil in A.M. schools to 10.9 per pupil in the other group of schools. From other tables of data he comes to the conclusion that the language environment, home environment and the medium of instruction in primary and high schools have considerable influence on the pupils' proficiency in that language. The use of English as teaching medium in the primary school probably favoured the learning of the language in the high school.

In Chapter VI he discusses the error-groups in detail:

1. PUNCTUATION: (26.25% of the total number of errors).
These errors were classified into 9 types:-
 - (a) comma,
 - (b) full stop,
 - (c) capitalization,
 - (d) the hyphen,

- (e) apostrophe,
- (f) semicolon,
- (g) wrong joining of words,
- (h) quotation marks,
- (i) words wrongly separated.

Of these I regard d, e, g, and i as wrongly classified - these are not errors of punctuation, but of spelling. The omission of a hyphen or an apostrophe changes the spelling of a word, but it does not affect punctuation, the same is true of the wrong joining or not joining of words, e.g. my self (myself), or atlast (at last).

Commas were omitted in parenthetical statements and qualifying or explanatory phrases and sometimes randomly used, or used instead of full stops.

Full stops were often omitted at the end of a sentence, or a dash (-) was used instead of a full stop.

Capitals were wrongly used for common nouns, or not used in writing place names, e.g. Vaalriver for Vaal River (This I regard as a spelling error.)

Quotation marks, exclamation marks, question marks and the colon were mostly omitted, or other marks of punctuation were used instead.

2. SPELLING: (16.5% of the total number of Errors.)

These were also classified for "the purpose of presenting the data in a useful manner".⁽³⁾ A few of the types are:

- (a) Confusion with and imitation of the corresponding Afrikaans word, e.g. basaars, theater, som, lusern, etc.
- (b) Errors due to mispronunciations: woond for wound, saught for sought, meterial for material, etc.
- (c) "Inaccurate observation": to (too); ly (lie), loose (lose). (I would call these errors of inaccurate recall or word confusion.)

Various other categories, 13 in all, were used all of which I shall not repeat here.

3. GRAMMAR: (21.01% of the total number of errors.)

- (a) THE VERB (13.08% of the total number of errors and 62.25% of the "Grammar" errors.) Twelve categories of verb errors were distinguished, but it is impossible to judge the validity of

the classification with any fairness, since the examples are mostly given out of context. It does seem as if there was some confusion in this classification as to the functional use of verbs in sentences and a knowledge of the formal aspects of verb-structure, e.g. the past participles, shall/will distinctions, etc.

(i) Past Tense: (4.83% all errors).

The error was that of failure to use the Past tense, or the use of a wrong form, e.g.

'he kepted,' 'They were jolly and quite forget.' (This is clearly an error of the sequence of tenses.)

(ii) Present tense: (1.39%) - the use of a past tense for a present tense, e.g. 'some might (may) be talking.'

(iii) Pluperfect: (1.37%) - e.g. "after he done/did, he ran...."

The influence of Afrikaans is mentioned as a factor responsible for errors, but it is not discussed.

(b) ADVERB AND ADJECTIVE: The most common error noted here was the use of adjectival forms as adverbs, e.g. 'she got them safe (safely) outside,' and the use of the double comparative, e.g. much more healthier.

(c) NOUN AND PRONOUN: The pronoun errors (3.07%) were errors of agreement, e.g. a plural subject followed by it/its; the use of 'what' for 'that'. Noun errors totalled 1.35% of the errors.

4. SENTENCE STRUCTURE: (13.32% of all errors).

Of these 60% (8% of all errors) were errors of "agreement of subject and predicate," e.g. a plural noun followed by a singular verb, or a singular noun followed by a plural verb, and errors of agreement after multiple subjects, e.g. 'the cat and the dog was'. This, he says, is a "prevalent" error, since Afrikaans doesn't make this distinction.

He admits that errors of word order, e.g. 'A farmer has today the best job', are "much the same thing as idiom," but though that is to a large extent the case, the particular errors seemed to be due "more to carelessness of structure than to a lack of knowledge of idiom." (4)

He acknowledges that these should be regarded as serious errors apart from their frequency and this makes him realise that teaching "rules" doesn't suffice, the best way of overcoming this difficulty is by practice and meeting with it frequently "in the spoken and written forms of the language." (5)

5. IDIOM: (12.06% of all errors).

This category includes: prepositions (3.12%); idiom (6.75%); and Africanderisms (2.19%). The investigator admits that he had difficulty in distinguishing among these three types of errors and "only those errors were classified as Africanderisms which seemed to be clearly due to the influence of Afrikaans on the English of the test-pupil." (6)

I found that it was true of nearly all the examples given under this heading, and that these errors clearly reveal the interference of the mother tongue of the pupils.

6. WORD-USAGE: (10.86% of all errors).

This category includes: vocabulary (9.82%) and meaning, (1.04%) - "meaning" comprised errors of "obscurity of thought or expression due to lack of clearness on the part of the test-pupil," (7) e.g. "the wood was thickly cultivated," for "it was dense". Vocabulary ranked fourth among the errors and included such errors as: corner, for gable; city, for village; chucked, for thrown; etc.

This was a valuable pioneering research and a significant contribution towards the study of the difficulties of Afrikaans-speaking students of English as a second language.

B. VISSEER, G.P.: 'N OBJEKTIEWE VERGELYKING VAN TWEE UITDRUKKINGSVORME IN DIE TWEDE TAAL BY AFRIKAANS SPREKENDE LEERLINGE (1938).

As its title indicates, this research was primarily concerned with the relative values of the composition and the letter as forms of expression.

5. Stander, F.: op. cit., p.107.

6. Stander, F.: op. cit., p.108.

7. Stander, F.: op. cit., p. 108.

He found that the compositions were slightly longer than the letters, girls wrote more than boys, and that std. VI pupils used more complex and compound sentences than std. V pupils and generally made fewer mistakes. In order to be able to evaluate the written compositions and letters, he had to take an error-count.

Errors were divided into two main groups or classes, viz. "Algemene Foute" and "Tegniese Foute":

Technical Errors: 10,083 (19.9 per composition/letter.)

These consisted of: spelling, 4471; commas; 2729; capitals, 1712; and full stop errors, 1171. The high incidence of errors in punctuation reveals the inexperience of the pupils in writing English.

General Mistakes ("Algemene Foute"): 5535. (10.9 per composition/letter) These were classified as follows: verb. (38.1%); sentence construction (20.9%); grammatical errors (20.4%); wrong word usage (14.7%); Afrikanerisms (6.0%).

a. TECHNICAL ERRORS.

1. SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION.

There was a tendency with pupils who wrote the composition to write more circumspectly, often at the expense of clarity. This, according to him, revealed an inability on the part of the pupils to think coherently, as well as a lack of understanding of the essential nature of the paragraph. He ascribes this to the tradition of writing compositions in schools, instead of short paragraphs and letters, before the pupils are ready to do this. He proves at the hand of Steyn's research in connection with the types of sentences used by Afrikaans-speaking pupils: "dat die Afrikaans-sprekende kind gestrem word as hy sy gedagtes d.m.v. die tweede of vreemde taal moet uitdruk." (8)

2. PUNCTUATION:

Punctuation was considered as organic and not as mechanical in nature and, therefore, essential to correct written expression. Errors in using the comma and full stop amounted to 7.7% of the total number of errors.

Full stops were overused or too seldom used; the semi-colon was never used; comma errors were mostly errors of omission: in adverbial clauses, or to separate a number of substantives, e.g. "there were fishes flowers" etc., and also in parentheses.

3. SPELLING: (8.9 errors per pupil, or 29.8% of all errors.)

The following types were noted:- (9)

- (a) mute letters - (clime for climb)
- (b) Words easily confused - (restuarant for restaurant.)
- (c) Homonyms - (their - there; meat - meet)
- (d) Compound words with altered spelling - (city - cities, till - until)
- (e) Simple words misspelt - (things for thinks, bild).
- (f) Confusion due to wrong pronunciation - (mep, twelf)
- (g) Order of the letters - (recieve - receive).
- (h) Confusion of Afrikaans and English - (dunner - dinner).

On the whole I do not regard this as a very useful classification, e.g. to confuse "dunner" with "dinner" cannot be ascribed to the influence of Afrikaans. He concludes that spelling in the primary school is of a low standard.

b. "ALGEMENE FOUTE."

1. THE VERB: (2105 errors, or 38% of the "Alg. Foute".)

The usual types of errors were noted, e.g. sequence of tenses; the use of the Past tense for the Past Perfect tense; congruence, and a category of errors labelled: "Tydsverskil verwarring van verlede en teenwoordige tyd."

2. SENTENCE STRUCTURE: (20.9% of the "Algemene Foute.")

The following classification was used:-

- (a) Phrases or incomplete sentences.
- (b) Wrong use of punctuation.
- (c) Too many "and" and "then" compound sentences.

- (d) Wrong word order.
- (e) Too long sentences (obscurity).
- (f) Confusion of ideas.
- (g) Wrong relative pronouns.
- (h) Sentences of the type of: "The giant stood by his bed who was seven feet high."
- (i) "and.....and.....and" clauses strung together.
- (j) Too many simple sentences.
- (k) Afrikaans influence (from the examples given here, he apparently confused this with verb usage and with idiom.)

3. WORDS AND PHRASES USED WRONGLY:

Under this heading "was al die foute gerangskik wat nie onder foutiewe sinsbou of Afrikanerismes gerangskik kon word nie," e.g. the breast (bust) of the king; on (at) the foot of the rockery; expression used for impression.

4. "GRAMMATIKALE FOUTE": (20.4% of the "Algemene Foute")

Four categories of error were noted, viz:

- (a) the article: a for an.
- (b) Adjectives used as adverbs.
- (c) Prepositions: on the show (at) (why then is "on the foot of the rockery" classified under the previous heading?)
- (d) Pronouns: "I washed me" (myself); the cannon with its' bombs (its) (This, to me, is a matter of word confusion or wrong spelling).

5. "AFRIKANERISMES":

- (a) Literal translations of Afrikaans proverbs, e.g. I slept like a stone. ('n klip).
- (b) Translations of structural and syntactical forms from Afrikaans, e.g. I stood up early, etc.

It seems as if Mr. Visser became confused when he had to deal with the major errors involving the idiom and the expression structure of English and some of the categories were not, in my opinion, correctly sub-classified.

In the last chapter he states that pupils exhibit a strong tendency to use "Afrikanerismes" and suggests that they should be taught to think in English in order to combat direct translation. **They** should

also receive instruction in English idioms (proverbs?) because "hulle sal langs hierdie weg leer dat die belangrikste eienskap wat taalgebruik betref, is nie om woordkennis (vocabulary?) van 'n taal te besit nie, maar wel 'n kennis van die idioom van die taal wat feitlik die draers is van die gees van die taal." (10)

C. MARKS, T.P.: A RESEARCH INTO THE SECOND LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES (WRITTEN) IN NATIVE SECONDARY SCHOOLS. (1938).

- a. In the introduction Mr. Marks writes that "the writer has come to the conclusion that in addition to the difficulties inherent in learning a language there are many difficulties experienced by natives which white people do not experience. For example, the Native pupil often has to unlearn what he has already learnt." This research was undertaken in order "to find out wherein lie the difficulties experienced by the pupils. In addition to number and kinds of errors, also sex, tribe, age, influence of the vernacular, environment, extent to which the second language is used orally" (11) were considered.

An important feature of this study is the fact that the investigator realised the importance of the home language background of the pupil as a retarding influence in the process of acquiring a new language. He states that: "Writing free composition is really a difficult piece of work, and children should not be given such an exercise until they are ready for it. Not only has the child to express new ideas: he has to juggle with grammatical forms and with idiom in the language. Such composition belongs to a stage when the child has gained a fair command over the technicalities of the language." (12) This is a sound approach to the problem of composition writing.

b. CLASSIFICATION OF ERRORS. (CHAPTER VI)

The following table gives his classification of

-
10. Visser, G.P.: op. cit., p.148.
11. Marks, T.P.: op. cit., p.6.
12. Marks, T.P.: op. cit., p.33.

errors, with, in column 4, Stander's percentages, and in column 5, his ranking, given for corresponding error categories only.

T A B L E I I I .

REPRODUCTION OF MARKS'S ERROR CATEGORIES AND HIS COMPARISON OF HIS OWN RESULTS WITH THOSE OF STANDER'S. (13)

ERROR-TYPE		MARKS, T.P.			STANDER, F.	
		TOTAL	PERCENTAGE	RANKING	%	RANKING
1	Article	1158	4.88	5	1.99	12
2	Agreement	368	1.55	13	8	5
3	Vocabulary	1014	4.27	6	9.82	4
4	Preposition	774	3.26	7	3.12	7
5	Idiom	572	2.41	9	6.75	6
6	Spelling	4135	17.41	2	16.5	2
7	Meaning	521	2.19	10	1.04	14
8	Structure	2774	11.68	3	2.46	10
9	Noun	487	2.05	11	1.35	13
10	Pronoun	719	3.03	8	3.07	8
11	Adjective	52	.22	16	.69	16
12	Adverb	95	.40	15	.93	15
13	Verb	1790	7.54	4	12.98	3
14	Conjunction	375	1.58	12	.27	17
15	Order of Words	201	.84	14	2.59	9
16	Punctuation	8714	36.69	1	26.25	1

The comparison of the percentages of errors and the ranking are interesting, but it must be kept in mind that the types of errors are not always exactly identical. If the percentage of what Stander calls "Africanderisms" were to be added to his categories of "structure", "idiom", and "order of words", and the percentages of Marks for the categories of "idiom", "structure", and "order of words" were also to be added up, they would yield the following percentages: Stander: 13.99%; Marks: 14.93%, for what may be considered as more or less the same types of errors.

13. Marks, T.P.: *ibid.*, p.57.

Marks himself made this comparison and writes:
 "Stander found that punctuation errors ranked first"...
 and "..... his two most frequent errors are the same
 as those of this study, and the percentage of his
 first six error-categories is almost the same as
 those of the first six error-categories of the present
 study - 80% to 82%." (14)

He also reduced his sixteen categories to six,
 as follows:-

Grammar - verb, adverb, adjective, noun, pronoun,
 and article;

Sentence Structure - conjunctions, structure, agreement,
 and order of words;

Word usage - meaning and vocabulary;

Idiom - preposition and idiom.

The results are given in the following table:-

T A B L E IV.

MARKS'S COMPARISON OF HIS SIX MAJOR ERROR CATEGORIES
 WITH THOSE OF STANDER. (15)

ERRORS	MARKS, T.P.			STANDER, F.	
	TOTAL	%	RANKING	%	RANKING
Punctuation	8714	36.69	1	26.25	1
Spelling	4135	17.41	2	21.01	2
Grammar	4301	18.11	3	16.5	3
Sentence Structure	3718	15.66	4	13.32	4
Word usage	1535	6.46	5	12.06	5
Idiom	1346	5.67	6	10.86	6

c. DISCUSSION OF ERROR CATEGORIES.

In chapter VI he explains the influence of the vernacular: "In learning English (the pupil) not only has to add, but to subtract. If he forgets the complete process, or is careless, he falls into error very often. The explanation of many of the mistakes he makes in writing English is that he is thinking in his own language.....and so it is impossible in school to eradicate all the errors

14. Marks: *ibid.*, p.59.

15. Marks: *ibid.*, p.61.

the pupils make." (16)

1. PUNCTUATION: (36.69% of all errors).

He remarks that "the general impression gained was that the Native boy and girl avoids punctuation as much as possible, as though afraid of it." (17)
Full stop and comma errors were most frequent.

2. SPELLING: (17.41% of all errors).

In defence of the Bantu pupils' poor spelling, Mr. Marks points out the fact that the spelling of Bantu languages is phonetic. The pupil applies this to English and "..... because he is thinking in his own language, and knows the spelling in his own language for certain sounds, he unconsciously falls into the error." (18)

3. GRAMMATICAL ERRORS: (18.11% of all errors).

(a) THE VERB:

(i) Bantu pupils, like Afrikaans-speaking pupils, had difficulty with the English usage of two verbs where in their own language they have only one, e.g. learn/teach.

(ii) Overfondness of using the Present tense - this was due to the use of this tense for emphasis and as an immediate Future tense in their languages. It is, moreover, the most common tense in the vernacular. It is evident from the above and other sub-categories of errors, that the Bantu pupils experienced the same difficulty in using the English tenses as Afrikaans-speaking pupils, due to the fact that tense usage in their own language is much more straightforward and fewer tenses are used.

(b) THE ADVERB, ADJECTIVE and NOUN errors, were the same as those found by the other two investigators in the compositions of Afrikaans-speaking pupils.

16. Marks: *ibid.*, p.86.

17. Marks: *ibid.*, p.94.

18. Marks: *ibid.*, p.98-99.

- (c) THE ARTICLE: (26.9% of the errors of this category).

The omission of the article in Bantu languages is blamed for the rate of incidence of this type of error.

4. SENTENCE STRUCTURE: (15.66% of all errors).

(a) The errors classified under the headings of sentence structure and word-order are mostly examples of literal translations.

(b) AGREEMENT: Many of these errors are, according to the investigator, the result of thinking in the vernacular, others are due to carelessness.

5. WORD USAGE: (6.46% of all errors).

Two types of error are mentioned, viz. long, sentences rendered obscure by incoherence, and vocabulary. Vocabulary errors were due to the pupils' not knowing "the exact word to use on certain occasions," (19) e.g. pupils used for people; welcomed used for accepted.

6. IDIOM: (5.67% of all errors.)

Two types of error are mentioned: viz. prepositional errors and "Idiom". Some of the latter could be ascribed to literal translation - what was good Xhosa became incorrect English when translated literally - others were due to mistakes made in using English idiomatic expressions.

Many of the errors classified under the last four headings, he says, "could be traced directly to the mother tongue (as) most of the pupils have not made sufficient progress in the second language to be able to think in it." (20)

19. Marks: *ibid.*, p.115.

20. Marks: *ibid.*, p.117. Mr. Marks realised that the influence of the vernacular was responsible for a great many different types of errors, and in many places he successfully pointed out the differences between vernacular and second language which led to these errors, e.g. in spelling (pp.96-97), the verb (pp.100-104), etc. The first of the topics for research suggested by him (cf. p.125) is:- "The extent to which thinking in the vernacular influences the second language."

It is interesting to note that while categories 5 and 6 (Word usage and Idiom) of Marks's classification contain only 12.13% of all errors, the corresponding categories of Stander's study contain 22.92% of the errors. This could be ascribed to differences of classification, but it may, to some extent, be the result of the fact that in the Bantu schools English was the medium of instruction. They are, therefore, to be regarded as T.M. Schools. Yet, it is here that Marks found most evidence of mother tongue interference. (cf. pp.117-118).

The position is slightly different in the case of the other two studies that were examined. These were conducted in English medium Coloured Schools in the Cape Peninsula, but in both cases the majority of the pupils were in reality Afrikaans-speaking. The investigators had reason to complain of this since it was found that Afrikaans-speaking English, Higher Grade, pupils made a number of mistakes that were undoubtedly due to mother tongue interference. Mr. Michaels found that, contrary to Dr. E.G. Malherbe's conclusion: "The least one can claim.....is that English as a subject by itself definitely doesn't suffer, and that Afrikaans is very considerably enhanced by the bilingual school organisation" (21)..... "the teaching of English as a first language to children whose mother-tongue is Afrikaans, has a very serious effect upon the linguistic progress of the pupils, because there is a continual intrusion of the true mother tongue on the expression of the adopted one and the standard of English in the T.M. schools consequently falls far short of first language standards." (22)

D. VAN DER WESTHUIZEN, J.E.: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE STANDARD OF ENGLISH COMPOSITION IN STD. IX AND X AT SELECTED COLOURED SCHOOLS IN THE CAPE PENINSULA.

In this study the author "confined (himself) particularly to the standard of the language used by the pupils.

21. Malherbe, E.G.: op. cit., p.74.

22. Michaels, C.: op. cit., p.86-87.

As a result, the aim of this investigation is to discover the common errors in written composition made by pupils who are taking English on the higher grade; to classify these errors, and to make some suggestions for improvement." (23)

The classification of errors is as follows:

1. THE VERB - he observed that Afrikaans-speaking pupils made mistakes that were due to the influence of Afrikaans owing to difficulty in "resisting the temptation to carry Afrikaans usage over into English through either thoughtlessness or ignorance." (24)
2. ERRORS IN THE USE OF PARTS OF SPEECH OTHER THAN THE VERBS.
Pronouns, the article, adjectives and adverbs are discussed in this chapter.
3. SPELLING: The errors were classified into 8 categories.
4. EXPRESSION: Under this heading he deals with:-
 - (a) Vocabulary - He claims that a child can only use words he has assimilated and that lists of words will not arouse "the realisation of words."
Paucity of vocabulary was often compensated for by using words which sounded mature; this often resulted in malapropisms being used. Economy was seldom found in the essays, its opposite, tautology, very often.
 - (b) Prepositions - these also revealed the influence of Afrikaans.
 - (c) Unidiomatic use of parts of the verb - e.g. the confusion of gerund and infinitive.
 - (d) Sentence construction - was too loose, with many clumsy, run-on sentences.
 - (e) Punctuation - the comma was mostly omitted.
 - (f) Verbosity - the practice of writing up to the subject, leading, he found, to obscurity and the use of inappropriate words.

Afrikaans influence was noticed in the use of both vocabulary and idiom. This is explained by the fact that of the 209 pupils whose essays were examined only 99 were English-speaking, while 110 were Afrikaans-speaking.

23. V.d. Westhuizen, J.E.: op. cit., p.3.

24. V.d. Westhuizen: op. cit., p.12.

E. MICHAELS, C.: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE STANDARD OF WRITTEN COMPOSITION IN THE SIXTH STANDARD AT E.M. COLOURED SCHOOLS IN THE CAPE PENINSULA.

In an investigation conducted along the lines of the previous one, Mr. Michaels also found that only 45% of the pupils were English-speaking, as against 55% Afrikaans-speaking pupils. These pupils are "at a disadvantage... the English compositions of Afrikaans-speaking children are often translations of thinking which has been done in terms of the Afrikaans language forms, and since these forms differ, as in the inflexions of the verbs, mistakes are often made." (25) Thus, in the case of errors of concord, 71.4% of the errors were made by Afrikaans-speaking pupils, while in one school, where 98% of the pupils were English-speaking, only 9 out of 50 made this type of mistake. Likewise, of the 38.4% of the pupils who made sequence mistakes only 20% were English-speaking, 80% were Afrikaans-speaking.

Errors were classified into:

- (a) Verb-errors - if these concord and sequence errors were labelled as "serious" errors.
- (b) Pronoun-errors.
- (c) Idiom and expression - this category revealed extensive influence of Afrikaans while "the nature of many of the literal translations indicated that even the (pupils') knowledge of Afrikaans idiom was often faulty..... It would seem, that not only has the home language of the pupils had an adverse influence on their use of English, but that the faulty use of the Afrikaans forms has tended to increase faulty expression in English." (26)
- (d) Vocabulary: - "The range of vocabulary must be judged, not so much by the number of words of which the meanings are known, as by the ability to apply them in the expression of thoughts and ideas." (27)
The range of vocabulary displayed in these compositions was very limited - and judgement was made more difficult by the number of Afrikaans-speaking pupils in the classes.

25. Michaels: op. cit., pp.35-36.

26. Michaels: ibid., pp.54-56.

27. Michaels: ibid., p.59.

- (e) Spelling: - the usual types of errors were noted but spelling was found to be very good in comparison with the figures given by other investigators, viz. only 692 errors, or less than 3 per pupil - which can be attributed to the fact that these were E.M. schools.
- (f) Sentence Structure: - Incomplete sentences (sub-ordinate clauses), incorrect word order, and phrase order were the most serious errors. Some were due to the influence of Afrikaans, while others could be ascribed to the inability of the pupils to think logically. Conjunctions most used were "and", "and then", "so", and "then"; "pupils merely connected a number of simple sentences in apparent co-ordinate relation, without thought of balanced structure of complex sentences." (28) Punctuation was partly responsible for errors in sentence structure, commas being mostly used wrongly.

These investigations into the written compositions of pupils show that errors occurring in the compositions show a measure of consistency as to types. This seems to point to a common source of many of the errors committed by these pupils who were of different races and standards. This source has, according to 4 of the five investigators, something to do with the home language of the pupil.

F. SUMMARY OF THE ERRORS FOUND BY THESE INVESTIGATORS.

The principal types of error were found to be:

- (i) THE VERB AND TENSE USAGE: (Visser, Stander, Marks, Van der Westhuizen and Michaels.)
- (a) Concord - this especially shows the influence of Afrikaans verb usage; is/are; was/were.
- (b) Tenses - mainly the pluperfect tense.
- (c) Verb-forms and inflexions - the 3rd person-S; -ed and -t forms of the past tense, the infinitive, and participles.
- (d) Sequence of tenses - this too shows the influence of Afrikaans tense usage.
- (e) Auxiliary verbs and their past tenses, and the use of the infinitive or past participle with the auxiliary verb, e.g. could go; has gone.

- (f) Gerund and present participle and their use.
- (g) Subjunctive mood - the use of 'were'.
- (h) Passive voice, and passive voice forms.
- (ii) PUNCTUATION: (All 5 investigators, ranking 1-4).
 - (a) The Comma - errors of omission, e.g. in parenthetical statements, and restricted usage, e.g. therefore, and of commission, e.g. the random use of commas, etc.
 - (b) Full Stop - omission of full stops.
 - (c) Other marks of punctuation not used (cf. Marks), or used wrongly, i.e. inorganic punctuation.
- (iii) SPELLING: (Visser, Stander, Marks, Van der Westhuizen, Michaels, ranking 1-3).
 - (a) Pronunciation - spellings (slovenly or phonetic).
 - (b) Homophones - their/there, brake/break, etc.
 - (c) Identical pronunciation, different spellings, e.g. ei/ie in receive, niece; able/ible; ence/ance; ent/ant; etc.
 - (d) Single and double consonants - dissapointed, etc.
 - (e) Two words vs. one word, c.g. every body for everybody; infront for in front.
 - (f) Misspelling of foreign loan words - "champagne"
 - (g) Afrikaans spellings - e.g. s for c, standerd, Saterdag, twelfe.
 - (h) S.A. Proper names - Vaalriver, Mooistreet, Basoetoland (and the Capitalization of adjectives derived from proper nouns).
- (iv) THE NOUN: (see Vocabulary).
- (v) PRONOUNS:
 - (a) Personal pronouns - (number, person),
 - (b) reflexive pronouns,
 - (c) relative pronouns - who (whom), that, which,
 - (d) the indefinite pronoun - one,
 - (e) the demonstrative pronouns - what for that.
- (vi) THE ADJECTIVE:
 - (a) Wrong forms, e.g. helping for helpful, etc.,
 - (b) confusion of cognate forms - many/much, etc.,
 - (c) double comparatives - more happier, etc.
- (vii) THE ADVERB: mainly the use of the adjective as an adverb (omission of -ly).
- (viii) THE ARTICLES:
 - (a) Unidiomatic or redundant use of "the",
 - (b) use of a for an in restricted usage.

(ix) CONJUNCTIONS:

- (a) Weakening of sentence structure through over-using of: and, and then, (co-ordinative).
- (b) Inability to use subordinative conjunctions or wrong use of although, therefore, etc.

(x) PREPOSITIONS:

- (a) lack of knowledge of the restricted use of prepositions, e.g. at a place; into/in; etc.,
- (b) Influence of Afrikaans prep. usage.

(xi) SENTENCE STRUCTURE:

- (a) Too many simple sentences,
- (b) and...and...sentences (simple sentences in apparent co-ordinate relation). (see ix. above),
- (c) Obscurities resulting from unwieldy and overlong sentences. (esp. in the upper classes),
- (d) Subordinate clauses used as sentences,
- (e) Misrelated participial phrases and clauses,
- (f) Ineffective use of the elliptic sentence.

(xii) VOCABULARY:

- (a) paucity of vocabulary,
- (b) Malapropisms, (confusion of word-meanings),
- (c) literal translations and coinages,
- (d) writing up to the subject - often resulting in the error of tautology (verbosity).

(xiii) IDIOM:

Different meanings are attached to this category and different types of errors have been classified as errors of "idiom". The most obvious type of error is that of literal translation so that this category best shows the influence of the vernacular on the second language. Errors variously classified as Afrikanderisms (Visser and Stander), "idiom", "meaning", and many of those classified under "word-usage" and "prepositions", really belong here.

C H A P T E R I I I .

THE P R E S E N T I N V E S T I G A T I O N .

A.1. THE A I M S A N D THE N A T U R E O F THIS S T U D Y .

The present investigation is an attempt to assess the second-language proficiency of a group of first-year students at a Training College for Teachers.

These students will, within two or three years' time, qualify as teachers of English in the primary school. In order for them to become efficient teachers of English, of which they are themselves non-native speakers, they have to be trained to meet, fully, the requirements of second-language teaching. This not only requires an intensive course in the psychology, theory and methodology of second-language teaching, but, above all, active proficiency of a high standard in speaking and writing English and an understanding of its language system or "grammar".

Knowing what standard of active proficiency in the second language to expect of these students could, therefore, be of great help to lecturers in determining both methods of training and the content of the courses. Thus, the data of this investigation could be used in determining the actual linguistic needs of the students and enable lecturers to make provision for these in the English courses.

The decision to make use of the written compositions of students as a means of assessing their language ability was prompted by the fact that "written expression is normally conceived first in the mind in sound-images and is articulated aloud or silently as it is committed to paper.....Even though a more experienced writer represses all outward signs, the process of writing is still accompanied by 'inner speech' in the form of auditory and kinaesthetic images". ⁽¹⁾ This would mean that the written compositions, and the errors committed in writing them, would indicate the standard of the students' active mastery of the second language.

As has been said before, no similar investigation has, to my knowledge, been undertaken in South Africa

1. Anderson, D.F.: A Survey of the Abilities Needed in Learning English, in E.L.T., Vol. V, No.7, pp.190 & 172.

at an after-school level. Various theories have been advanced by other investigators as to the types and frequency, and the sources of the common errors of students of English as a second language. These I wanted to verify with regard to the written work of students who had passed the final school examination in English, Lower Grade, and were eligible for admission to institutions for higher education.

I was further prompted to undertake this study by the writings on interlingual interference referred to in chapter I of this study, ⁽²⁾ and the possibilities opened up by Prof. Lado's approach to second-language teaching. Various claims have been made in respect of the value of a comparative study of the two languages involved to the teaching of foreign languages by Prof. Lado himself. However, if it was to be used to any advantage, these would have to be verified in respect of the two languages involved in the bilingual situation in South Africa.

Theoretically, linguistic interference should be most evident in the active or expressive use of the second language, i.e. in speaking, or in writing it. Of these two forms of expression, the written composition seemed to me to be a more reliable and a more useful test for purposes of this investigation, since it could be examined more carefully and referred to as often as necessary. Moreover, the second-language teacher has also to be able to write the second language correctly. This is one of the ultimate aims of English, second language, teaching and, therefore, should apply to students who have passed the final school examinations even before they are admitted to a Training College for Teachers.

By means of this study, I wanted to discover, by tracing the errors to their sources, to what extent students at this stage of their linguistic development had succeeded in overcoming the inhibitory interference of the mother tongue.

2. Cf. Lado: op. cit., Foreword and Chapter I.

Also: Fourie: Fundamentals of Second Language Teaching, p.15.

Venter: English Prepositional Usage, pp.4-6.

Weinreich: op. cit., p.2.

If evidence of interference could be established, the object of this investigation was to determine, as far as possible, the nature and the extent of such interference. Whether this proved to be serious or negligible, would then enable the investigator to judge the validity and the usefulness of Prof. Lado's fundamental assumption as to the value of a comparative analysis of the two languages involved to the teaching of a second or foreign language. In this study a great many other factors that determine language ability could have been examined as well, e.g. home environment and other extra-lingual factors, or the method of teaching English at the high school formerly attended by the student, even the medium of the high school could perhaps have had some influence on the student's command of the second language.

These would have been both interesting and rewarding fields to explore, but I decided to concentrate on the actual level of proficiency of the students, as revealed in these compositions written by them, and to investigate that rather than the probable causes and factors that could have contributed towards the attainment of this standard of proficiency. For this reason the essays were examined for the errors only, and this study may be regarded as an empirical research into the second-language proficiency of a particular group of matriculated students.

2. THE FORM OF THE TEST.

The decision to make use of a written composition rather than an objective, standardised language test, was made in the light of the discussion, in chapter I, sections D and E, on the value of the essay as a device for measuring active proficiency in a language. Moreover, the essay, being a more formal type of written assignment, was considered to be better suited to the requirements of this type of investigation.

In the choice of the subject, or subjects, a number of factors had to be considered. Primary among these was that of a multiple choice of subjects, or of a single subject of general interest, since this could possibly place some of the students at a disadvantage with regard to their knowledge of the subject and their ability to write on it in English. A further consideration was

that I wished to ensure as large a measure of uniformity as possible in the treatment of the subject and in the vocabulary used in the compositions. In order to avoid running the risk of having to deal with the "flowery" type of school composition, the title had to be interesting, yet challenging - something on which every student should at least have a few sound ideas and sufficient factual knowledge.

Since the nature of the subject determines, to a large extent, the way in which the student has to write, I decided to choose a subject of the expository type. This type of subject comes closest to the actual classroom situation which demands exposition, narrative and argument, or what may perhaps be described as "conversational" ability in the use of the second language. I, therefore, chose a subject on which I thought every student would be able to write a composition of the required length of 450 - 600 words:

SOUTH AFRICA - ITS PEOPLE, PLACES AND PROBLEMS.

In addition to writing the essay, students also had to complete a brief questionnaire (Appendix A). The purpose of this questionnaire was to find out more about the students' previous experience in using the second language at school or elsewhere. It was intended to furnish the investigator with such information about the educational background of the students as a teacher usually has of the pupils in his class. It was not intended to be a major issue in this investigation or in the interpretation of the data.

3. THE TESTEES.

The students with whom this investigation is concerned belong to that group of students who annually enrol at this College of Education for a two-year course of professional training as primary school teachers. Though they may afterwards specialize in one or another school subject, e.g. Physical Training, or Dramatic Art and Diction, etc., this can only be done after they have completed the basic course of training.

The testees were a group of 100 students, 50 men and 50 women, all of whom had passed the final school examination in English as a second language and had enrolled at this College, for the first time, at the beginning of the first semester. They, therefore, had to complete a two-year course in English which is the same

in every respect and which is designed to train them to teach English as a second language in the primary school. As a group they are fully representative of the students annually admitted to this particular course at this College of Education. For the purpose of this investigation they are, therefore, to be regarded as a representative and a homogeneous group.

4. THE WRITTEN TEST.

Owing to a full programme in the first term, the test could not be taken until the 22nd April, 1959. I personally supervised the test while senior students of the T.H.E.D., fourth year, group acted as invigilators.

The student-invigilators were briefed beforehand in the filling in of the questionnaire and their duties as invigilators. Students were asked to report at different rooms, as arranged, at least five minutes before the test was to commence.

They had to fill in the questionnaire first and then to start writing the essay, for which they were allowed one hour after they had completed the questionnaire. Instructions with regard to the essay were of a technical nature only, as I wanted them to give their own interpretation of the subject: it had to be of the required length, and they were encouraged to write as well as they could, since the essays would be used in assessing their ability to write English. Rough work, e.g. the planning of the essay, had to be shown on pages 2 and 4 of the double sheets of folio with which they were provided. The essay had to be written on pages 1 and 3, (and 4, if necessary).

5. THE MARKING OF THE COMPOSITIONS.

After the error categories that were to be used had been experimentally finalised by marking small sets of essays according to various self-devised formulas, each essay was read and marked two or more times.

Error categories used by Marks, Stander and Visser were used on small sets of essays. These were found to be too cumbersome and not suitable for the type of error classification I intended to make.

I finally decided to use only two major categories, or classes of errors, each with a small number of sub-categories. These two categories, or classes, of error were based on the two distinctive aspects of the process whereby speech is rendered as writing, viz:

- (a) invention and organisation, i.e. determining what is to be written and the selection of vocabulary and structural patterns with which to communicate, and
- (b) the use of the conventional writing system of the language as a vehicle of communication, i.e. the spelling of words and the use of punctuation to represent certain features of speech, e.g. pause and juncture.

CLASS I: Since invention and organisation precede the writing down of speech, the errors of CLASS I may be described as errors committed by students before they wrote down their thoughts. These errors would, therefore, reflect the standard of the students' active mastery of the structures of expression and content of the second language and of its vocabulary. These errors were divided into SIX sub-categories:-

- (a) "Word" - errors;
- (b) Errors of Idiom and Translation;
- (c) Errors of Obscurity
- (d) Verb Errors
- (e) Prepositional Errors.
- (f) Errors of Word Order.

CLASS II would contain the errors committed by students in using the writing system of English as a vehicle of thought-communication. These orthographical errors comprised the THREE sub-categories of:

- (a) Spelling,
- (b) Punctuation,
- (c) Sentence Construction.

B. DISCUSSION AND EXPLANATION OF THE ERROR CATEGORIES USED IN THIS INVESTIGATION.

1. CLASS I - ERRORS.

This class contains errors which, to a greater or a lesser extent, affect the nature and the quality of the communication between writer and reader and pertain to the ability of the student to use the second language

as a medium of communication. According to the type of error, the errors may be more, or less, serious and may even result in a complete breaking down of communication. For example, the use of a wrong participial form of a verb, e.g. had took for had taken, in a context requiring the use of the Pluperfect tense, cannot be considered as grave an error as the use of had taken, or had took, in a context requiring a Past Indefinite tense, since this is not an English Past tense form, but a literal translation of Afrikaans verb usage in forming the preterite. It should not be difficult for the Afrikaans-speaking student of English to memorise the principal parts of its verbs, but it may be more difficult to learn to use a tense like the Past Perfect tense of English correctly, since this tense is non-existent in his home-language: its meaning is signalled in a different way which does not require the use of a specific and different tense form.

On the other hand, though no verb, tense, pattern, or even punctuation errors, occur in the following example, it is unintelligible: "We also have problems about the different kinds of education, the way of paying things, and so many others." In this sentence there is no communication of thought, except perhaps by inference from the paragraph context.

(a) WORD-ERRORS.

Here we do not even consider the appropriateness of words, i.e. the poet's or the writer's use of a word to convey just that meaning intended to evoke a certain feeling or association. This is considered a matter of "style" and, therefore, falls outside the scope of this investigation. It is solely a matter of the correctness of the word used, e.g. "wheat and mealies", not "corn and mealies" are the kinds of grain grown by Orange Free State farmers, and the Union consists of four provinces (not: "exists"). As a matter of fact, we do not think that it is fair, in terms of the aims of second language teaching, to expect matriculated students to have become so proficient in the second language that they will have attained a range of vocabulary much exceeding that of the

use of the correct word, i.e. that they will know that corn is not wheat. Many of the errors of this category may without further ado be called "malapropisms" - i.e. "confusions between words" (S.O.D.).

(b) ERRORS OF IDIOM AND TRANSLATION.

The errors of this category are those that are often labelled as "un-English", since they are violations of those set ways of expression peculiar to every language that are commonly known as the "idiom" of the language. Fowler and Fowler define idiom as "forms of speech that for some reason, often inscrutable, have proved congenial to the instinct of a particular language". (3)

These "forms of speech" are manifestations of the influence of the content structure of a language upon the structural patterns of its expression structure. They cannot act as substitutes for the basic structural patterns since they depend for their effect upon the substitution of different parts of speech, or function words, with different extensions and restrictions of the meanings of these substituted words, for those commonly used in the basic structural patterns of the language. "Patterns" of idiomatic usage may, in a way, be said to cut across the basic structural patterns of the language by superimposing themselves upon these.

It is in the idiomatic use of its vocabulary that mastery of a language most shows, since it directly involves the precision with which the language is used as a means of communication. Mastery of the basic structural patterns of a new language is of the utmost importance, but equally important is the mastery of the art of filling these language moulds with matter that is meaningful in terms of the idiomatic usage of the content and vocabulary of the language.

H.B. Dunkel writes as follows on this point:-
"The native speaker of a language, or the person

thoroughly versed in it, is certain to be impressed by the many possibilities opened up by progressive substitution in a very small number of basic patterns. This is wisdom after the fact. In part, he is able to substitute so much because he has long practiced this very activity and because he knows which substitutions are permissible. The foreigner is not in this position..... It is his poverty of resource which often prevents his thinking in the language." (4)

If the student is compelled by a "poverty of resource" to think in his native language, and then to "translate" into the second language, he is liable to commit two types of errors:-

- (a) errors of incorrect or unidiomatic use of the new language, or,
- (b) errors of imposing the idiomatic usage, with regard to its structural patterns and vocabulary, of his native language upon the second language, either by a process of analogy, or through ignorance.

It is, therefore, evident that, owing to the differences in idiomatic usage between languages, this is an area that is particularly susceptible to cross-association and inter-lingual interference, especially in those parts of their content structures, structures of expression and vocabularies, in which the languages differ.

(c) ERRORS OF OBSCURITY.

As the name indicates, these errors result in a complete breaking down of communication, as in the examples given below:-

"As a democratic land will proceeds in growing, and while noticing all the proceedings one can be asure that the land have a good future." This sentence cannot be understood by a reader.

The sentence: "We must try to give him a better outlook on our land.", is also meaningless to an Englishman.

There is an Afrikaans word "uitkyk" used in idiomatic expressions, such as, "sy uitkyk op die lewe" (i.e. attitude towards life), but it cannot be translated literally into English and doesn't fit into the meaning of this sentence. It is as completely meaningless to talk about "the immerse and the commerce of our country." (The student probably meant to use the words imports and exports, but this one has to guess.)

(d) VERB ERRORS.

When Prof. Lado defines culture as "the ways of a people" ⁽⁵⁾ and stresses the importance of cultural orientation as an aspect of second language learning, he is actually admitting that the "expression structure" of a language cannot be separated from its "content structure", but has its roots in "the ways of a people". ⁽⁶⁾ Weinreich calls the content structure of a language its "socio-cultural context". ⁽⁷⁾ The influence of the "content structure" of a language on its expression structure is best described by Sapir when he writes: "In a sense the network of cultural patterns of a civilization is indexed in the language which expresses that culture..... The fact of the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group..... we see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation." ⁽⁸⁾

Thus verb usage in English reflects a way of apprehending and interpreting reality that is different from that of Afrikaans. The major source of the verb errors of Afrikaans-speaking students of English is this difference in the interpretation of reality as exemplified in the use of tenses and verb-forms in English.

5. Lado: op. cit., p.110.

6. Gleason, H.A.: op. cit., p.7 & p.12-13.

7. Weinreich, U: op. cit., p.4.

8. Sapir: op. cit., p.161-162.

This statement is corroborated by the data of similar investigations by other South-African investigators. Visser found that verb errors were responsible for 38% of the errors of his category of "Algemene Foute". Stander reported that errors in verb usage totalled 13.08% of his total number of errors, or 62.25% of his "Grammar" errors. Marks reported that verb errors amounted to 7.54% of the total number of errors. (9)

It was necessary, for purposes of this investigation to divide verb errors into three sub-classes according to three important aspects in which English verb usage differs from that of Afrikaans, and which cause Afrikaans-speaking students of English to commit three distinct types of verb-errors, viz.

(i) Errors of Concord:

English verb usage is characterised by its having forms for number and person. The verb has to agree in number and in person with its antecedent. Afrikaans does not make this distinction.

(ii) Tense errors:

English not only has more tense forms than Afrikaans, but the rules for sequence of tenses are different from those of Afrikaans and, therefore, more easily forgotten or violated by the student.

(iii) Errors of Verb-form:

In English, participles are formed differently for "weak" and "strong" verbs, while English also differs from Afrikaans in the way auxiliary verbs, gerunds, and participles are used.

(e) PREPOSITIONAL ERRORS.

Writing about prepositional usage in English, Fowler & Fowler state as follows:-

"In an uninflected language like ours these

9. Cf. the discussion of the investigations of Stander, Visser and Marks in Chapter II.

are ubiquitous, and it is quite impossible to write tolerably well without a full knowledge, conscious or unconscious, of their uses. Misuse of them, however, mostly results, not in what may be called in the fullest sense blunders of syntax, but in offences against idiom..... To neglect them shows a writer, however good a logician he may be, to be no linguist - condemns him, from that point of view, more clearly than grammatical blunders themselves."⁽¹⁰⁾

Treble and Vallins claim that "perhaps the surest sign of the foreigner whose English is not perfect is his misuse of them." (i.e. prepositions - A. de B). ⁽¹¹⁾

Dr. J.A. Venter, who has made an exhaustive comparative study of English and Afrikaans prepositional usage (the first work of this type and scope to be undertaken in South Africa) writes that: "Prepositions constitute an important part of what is generally known as 'idiomatic usage'. They are so closely interwoven with the warp and woof of the language that the student cannot avoid them." ⁽¹²⁾

Since prepositional usage has its origin, not in the expression structure of the language, but in the vast and hitherto unexplored field of its content structure, mastery of the prepositional usage of a language like English, or Afrikaans, cannot be acquired from dictionaries or by the use of analogy. If the student does use analogy in an attempt to solve his problems, it usually fails and a wrong form is produced.

(f) ERRORS OF WORD ORDER.

Word order is perhaps the most important structural device of a deflected language like English. Although English and Afrikaans are cognate languages, there are significant differences in their structural patterns of word order.

10. Fowler & Fowler: op. cit., p.170.

11. Treble & Vallins: An A.B.C. of English Usage, p.145.

12. Venter, J.A.: English Prepositional Usage, p.3.

Students of English as a second language are liable to make the mistake of imposing the Afrikaans word-order on the English basic patterns, for example, by writing: "South Africa has also (het ook) a big population" instead of: "South Africa also has a big (large) population."

2. CLASS II - ERRORS.

The second class of errors may be described as orthographical errors, i.e. errors committed in writing down what has already been conceived in the mind of the writer.

(a) SPELLING.

English spelling is notoriously difficult and "learning English spelling presents some rather unusual difficulties because of inconsistencies in English word structure. The remarkable English language is a hodgepodge of incongruities and inconsistencies; it has never learned to spell itself. The words themselves are illiterate." (13)

The Afrikaans-speaking student who is used to the more or less strictly phonetic spelling of Afrikaans is likely to find the spelling of English very difficult indeed. (14)

(b) PUNCTUATION.

This is as difficult since it is practically impossible to lay down rules for punctuation. G.V. Carey writes: "I should define punctuation as being governed two-thirds by rule and one third by personal taste.... The first essential is that the meaning of what is written should be conveyed to the reader's mind, through his eye, with the least possible delay and without any ambiguity. I would say, therefore, that the function of punctuation is to make perfectly clear the construction of the

13. Hildreth: Teaching Spelling, p.4.

14. Cf. Marks: op. cit., pp.95-99 for his remarks on the spelling difficulties of Bantu pupils.

written word." (15)

(c) SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION:

These are not errors in the structure of the basic patterns, but in the construction of sentences and are closely related to punctuation. As a matter of fact, these may be regarded as the most serious type of punctuation errors, and include "sentences" which do not contain a complete unit of meaning, the use of a comma where a full-stop should have been used, writing a subordinate clause as a sentence by end-stopping it, writing a long, rambling sentence in which there is an incorrect relation, or no relation, among the different parts. They may be regarded as orthographical errors, since in speech they would probably pass unobserved and would not be heard as errors.

C. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE ERRORS.

1. INTRODUCTION.

After a brief general discussion of the errors, the two main classes of errors and the sub-categories of each class will be discussed separately.

The procedure in the discussion of the errors will be as follows:

- (1) Examples of the errors will be given and, if necessary, classified according to different aspects of the types of errors.
- (2) All examples of errors will be reproduced exactly as they were written by the students.
- (3) Examples will, as far as possible, be given in context to facilitate understanding of the classification and the nature of the error.
- (4) Only the error(s) of the category into which the example falls will be underlined.
- (5) Explanatory corrections, or translations ("equivalents") will be given only where necessary, and in brackets.
- (6) The classification of examples into different

classes, categories, or sub-categories, was made in full awareness of the fact that any classification of errors is largely the responsibility of the investigator himself. It will be understood that a great many of the errors in reality "defy classification, for one kind merges into another as grey shades off into blue." (16)

2. GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE ERRORS.

The two classes of error were together responsible for a total of 6,275 errors in the 100 essays, or 62.75 errors per student.

TABLE V...., below, gives an analysis of all the errors, with the percentages of the 9 sub-categories and their ranking.

T A B L E V.
A TABULATION OF THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF
ERRORS COMMITTED IN 100 ESSAYS.

CLASS & ERROR TYPE	NUMBER OF ERRORS	ERRORS PER UNIT	PERCEN- TAGE OF TOTAL	RANKING
<u>CLASS I.</u>				
Word-errors	1223	12.23	19.49	2
Errors of Idiom and Translation	909	9.09	14.49	4
Errors of Obscurity	188	1.88	2.99	8
Verb Errors	861	8.61	13.72	5
Prepositional Errors	297	2.97	4.73	6
Errors of Word Order	139	1.39	2.22	9
<u>TOTAL</u>	3617	36.17	57.64	
<u>CLASS II.</u>				
Spelling	1272	12.72	20.27	1
Punctuation	1194	11.94	19.03	3
Sentence Construction	192	1.92	3.06	7
<u>TOTAL</u>	2658	26.58	42.36	
<u>TOTAL OF ALL ERRORS</u>	6275	62.75	100.0	

Of the two classes of error, Class I-errors ranked first with 3,617 errors, or 57.64% of all errors, while Class II-errors totalled 2,658, or 42.36% of all errors. Spelling (1272 errors, or 20.27% of all errors) ranked first among the categories of error.

The following table (TABLE VI) is a tabulation of two groups of essays, viz. (a) The eleven essays in which fewest errors were committed and (b) The eleven essays in which most errors were committed.

T A B L E VI.

(a) ELEVEN ESSAYS IN WHICH FEWEST ERRORS WERE COMMITTED.			(b) ELEVEN ESSAYS IN WHICH MOST ERRORS WERE COM- MITTED.		
CLASS I	CLASS II	TOTAL	CLASS I	CLASS II	TOTAL
13	14	27	65	41	106
16	15	31	67	38	105
27	6	33	67	36	103
20	16	36	58	42	100
19	17	36	62	36	98
28	9	37	64	31	95
18	20	38	51	38	89
25	13	38	52	37	89
17	22	39	39	49	88
26	13	39	48	39	87
15	24	39	48	39	87

An examination of the figures of Table VI reveals that there is no consistent relationship between the two types of errors in either group of essays. Students committed more Class I errors than Class II-errors, in 75 essays, while 25 contained more orthographical errors than Class I-errors.

In the following table (TABLE VII (a) & (b)) a comparative analysis is given of the numbers of Class I- and Class II-errors in (a) the essays in which most errors of each class were committed, and (b) those in which fewest errors of each class were committed.

T A B L E VII.

TABULATION OF 4 GROUPS OF 10 ESSAYS EACH:-

- (a) THOSE CONTAINING MOST & FEWEST CLASS I-ERRORS
(b) THOSE CONTAINING MOST & FEWEST CLASS II-ERRORS.

(a)

ESSAYS IN WHICH MOST CLASS I-ERRORS WERE COMMITTED.			ESSAYS IN WHICH FEWEST CLASS I-ERRORS WERE COMMITTED.		
CLASS I	CLASS II	TOTAL	CLASS I	CLASS II	TOTAL
67	38	105	12	36	48
67	36	103	13	14	27
65	41	106	15	24	39
64	31	95	15	30	45
62	36	98	16	15	31
62	23	85	17	22	39
58	42	100	18	20	38
57	12	69	19	17	38
56	23	79	19	23	42
52	37	89	20	16	36

(b)

ESSAYS IN WHICH MOST CLASS II-ERRORS WERE COMMITTED.			ESSAYS IN WHICH FEWEST CLASS II-ERRORS WERE COMMITTED.		
CLASS I	CLASS II	TOTAL	CLASS I	CLASS II	TOTAL
32	54	86	27	6	33
24	50	74	41	7	48
39	49	88	28	9	37
31	48	79	36	9	45
38	46	84	50	10	60
31	45	76	37	10	47
39	43	82	32	12	44
58	42	100	57	12	69
65	41	106	25	13	38
39	41	80	43	14	57

An examination of the above table will reveal one important fact about the errors committed by students, viz. that there is no general trend in the relationship between the two Classes of errors.

This fact validates the division of the errors into the two distinct classes used in this study. It proves that the activity of writing a free composition exercise

in a language requires the combination of two separate skills, viz:

- (a) that of invention and organisation, which requires mastery of the structure, idiom and vocabulary of the language, and
- (b) that of handling the writing system of the language, which requires mastery of its conventions of spelling and punctuation.

3. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE ERRORS OF CLASS I.

(a) GENERAL DISCUSSION OF CLASS I-ERRORS.

In the discussion of the error categories used in this investigation (Cf. Section B of this chapter) these errors were described as errors committed by the student before writing, or while writing the essay, in thinking about what he wanted to write and in using the structural mechanism and the vocabulary of the language as a vehicle of communication.

Since "written language is typically a reflection, independent only in limited ways of the spoken language,"⁽¹⁷⁾ these errors should reveal the proficiency of the student in actively using the second language. The vocabulary used in writing on a subject will be a fairly accurate indication of the vocabulary the student may be expected to use in speaking about the same subject. The structural errors committed in writing will likewise be more or less the same that he will commit in speaking on the same topic.

T A B L E VIII.

TABULATION OF CLASS I-ERRORS WITH PERCENTAGES AND RANKING FOR THE CLASS AND FOR ALL ERRORS.

17. Gleason, H.A.: op. cit., p.10.

T A B L E VIII.

CLASS I	Number of Errors	Errors per Unit	% of Class I	Ranking	% of all Errors	Ranking (all Errors)
Word-errors	1223	12.23	33.81	1	19.49	2
Errors of Idiom & Translation	909	9.09	25.13	2	14.49	4
Errors of Obscurity	188	1.88	5.20	5	2.99	8
Verb Errors	861	8.61	23.81	3	13.72	5
Prepositional Errors	297	2.97	8.21	4	4.73	6
Errors of Word order	139	1.39	3.84	6	2.22	9
TOTAL	3617	36.17	100.0	-	57.64	-

The first two categories which, by their nature, reveal the range of the student's vocabulary and his ability to use it idiomatically, are together responsible for 58.94% of these errors. If the categories of obscurity and prepositional usage are grouped with these, these four categories, which may be said to cover all aspects of the student's knowledge of words and his ability to use them idiomatically and correctly, are together responsible for 72.35% of the errors of this class.

This to me indicates that the main obstacle to ideation is a lack of knowledge of words and their meanings, or an immature and, therefore, an insufficient active vocabulary. I am strengthened in this opinion by the small number of errors of word order committed by the students. This is the only category of errors that pertains solely to the ability of the student to use the basic structural patterns of the language and which reveals his ability to cope with that aspect of the expression structure of the language. This the students seem to have succeeded very well in mastering.

The following tabulation of errors was made in an attempt to discover if there was any definite relationship between the kinds of Class I-errors in individual essays in which the same number of errors were committed. For this purpose the number of errors was reduced to a percentage of the Class I-errors committed in each essay. The errors were re-classified into 3 main groups, viz:

- (A) Word-errors and Errors of Idiom and Translation,
- (B) Verb errors,
- (C) Obscurities, and errors of prepositional usage and word order.

(These may be said to represent, respectively, the bulk of word usage and meaning errors, the verb errors, which constitute a "natural" category, and a grouping of the three lesser categories. The first two essays are those in which fewest Class I-errors were committed, while the last two essays contained most errors of this class.)

T A B L E IX.

TABULATION OF CLASS I-ERRORS IN 3 GROUPS, VIZ.:

- (a) ERRORS OF WORD, IDIOM & TRANSLATION,
(b) VERB ERRORS,
(c) ERRORS OF OBSCURITY, WORD ORDER & PREP. USAGE.

<u>GROUP A</u>		<u>GROUP B</u>		<u>GROUP C</u>		<u>TOTAL NO (CLASS I ERRORS.)</u>
<u>ERRORS</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>ERRORS</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>ERRORS</u>	<u>%</u>	
11	91.7	0	0	1	8.3	12
9	69.2	1	7.7	3	23.1	13
12	80	1	6.7	2	13.3	15
8	53.4	2	13.3	5	33.3	15
11	68.8	1	6.2	4	25	16
17	68	3	12	5	20	25
20	80	2	8	3	12	25
19	63.4	7	23.3	4	13.3	30
18	60	7	23.3	5	16.7	30
14	46.7	15	50	1	3.3	30
15	50	12	40	3	10	30
19	47.5	7	17.5	14	35	40
30	75	8	20	2	5	40
32	80	6	15	2	5	40
29	72.5	7	17.5	4	10	40
32	64	7	14	11	22	50
29	58	12	24	9	18	50
32	64	11	22	7	14	50
37	55.2	19	28.4	11	16.4	67
45	67.2	11	16.4	11	16.4	67
Range % 91.7% - 46.7%		50% - 0%		35% - 3.3%		

From the above table the following may be observed:-

- (a) From the figures for the essays in which the same number of class I-errors were committed, e.g. 25, 40, 50, etc., it is apparent that no "error-pattern" can be established.
- (b) The following trends were, however, observed:

- (i) In 19 of the 20 essays group a errors were responsible for the majority of the Class I errors committed in individual essays (range 46.7% - 91.7%). Only two of the essays contained less than 50% group a errors.
- (ii) Group b (verb errors) was the second most important group of errors in 10 of the 20 essays. One essay contained more group b errors than group a errors, another contained as many group c as group b errors. (range: 0 - 50%) The eight essays containing more group c errors than group b errors included the 5 essays in which fewest mistakes were made.
- (iii) Group c errors rank third in 11 of the 20 essays (range: 3.3% - 35%.)

A study of the class I-errors committed by students reveals that there is not a consistent trend in the types, or in the numbers, of errors committed in individual essays. The range of Class I-errors committed in the 100 essays varies between 12 - 67 errors per essay, yielding an average of 36.17 errors per essay.

(b) WORD-ERRORS.

This sub-category of errors was responsible for 33.81% of the class I-errors committed by students, or 19.49% of the total number of errors committed in the 100 essays. (18)

This category covers a wide range of "word"-errors. It speaks for itself, since any uncertainty as to the meaning of a word, or its correct morphological form, or its syntactical function, results in the incorrect use of that word.

(a) Malapropisms.

The main source of "meaning" errors was the confusion of the meanings of words which results in the use of inappropriate words, and which can best be described by calling them "malapropisms":- (19)

18. Cf. Table VIII, p.63.

19. cf. Visser's category of wrong word usage (14.7% of the total number of errors); Stander's categories of adverb, adjective, noun, meaning and vocabulary (14.2%); and Marks's categories of vocabulary, meaning, noun, adjective, and adverb. (9.13%) These, as far as I could judge, include more or less the same types of errors as my category of "word-errors."

eventually (originally) only barbarians lived here,
places to remember (remind) us of battles,
an interested (interesting) place to visit,
camping facilities are instructed (constructed)?
the union/European group exists (consists) of...,
investigate (invest) their money,
..... immigrate (emigrate) to other places,
people of minor (inferior) intelligence,
it's a sorrow (pity),
embarrassing (?) icycles (in the Cango Caves),
the immerse and commerse of S.A. (import & export
trade),
hostile (hospitable) and hostility (hospitability)
wheat is sent to mills where it is mollod (ground)
food that are implouded (is imported),
Cape Town is a mysterical settlement,
the capitol (capital) of the O.F.S.
problems to dissolve (solve),
Onderstepoort is a place of world famous (fame)
electrical implements (appliances) domestic tools
(utensils),
Nature is unharmed (unspoilt),
visitors are accepted (received) heartily.....
in consideration (comparison) with,
industrial people (industrialists or workers) (?)
S.A. provides the sight loving man (?)
Kruger National Park the most wanted to see place...
You recognise (realise) that most of the farmers ...
The natives are handled (treated),
Some of the different nations (races) are, the
South African people the white bodies. The black
nation, our natives, which break up in different
sorts,

These "malapropisms" defy classification, and
any attempt at classifying them is a matter of con-
jecture, since we cannot know whether the student even
knew the other word, i.e. the one he should have
used, or the correct meaning of the word he used.
'Bona fide' confusions of words are, e.g. interested/
interesting; remember/remind; consist/exist. Sometimes
this confusion may have something to do with the
similarity in form or in sound between two words,

e.g. instructed/constructed; invest/investigate; it may be partly ascribed to homophonic confusion, e.g. piece/peace (here only the spelling of the words differs, and it is only a written malapropism.)

The other source of "malapropisms" is the inability of the student to find an English word. This leads to the use of "some" English word, or an attempt to circumvent the difficulty by the "invention" of a word which may or may not convey meaning.

Examples of this use of a "likely" word are: the immerse and commerse (the import and export trade) of S.A.; embarrasing icycles (in the Cango Caves); hostile, and hostility (for hospitable and hospitability).

The other type of error is that of invention, or the coining of a new word or even a phrase, e.g. wheat is molléd; Cape Town is a mysterie settlement; food is imploude; the most wanted to see place; the sight loving man.

Even here traces of mother-tongue influence could be detected and the type of error resulted from the negation, by the student, of the fact that there is seldom a one-to-one correspondence in meaning, and in distribution of meanings, between the words of any two languages, e.g. implements/tools; unharmed/unspoilt; sorrow/pity; industrial people (workers ?)/industrialists. This is most evident in the case of words of restricted usage, e.g. much/many; learn/teach; etc., e.g., much difficulties, much more problems, much kinds of people; many wool, many trouble (much) Time will learn us.

Our problem is growing greater and greater.
too lazy to do something (anything, "iets")

These words are used wrongly owing to fact that in English their use is restricted by the words with which they are used, while this is not the case in Afrikaans.

(b) Morphological Errors.

These were responsible for about 10 percent of the word errors, and are mostly errors of omission of

the morphological changes made in words when used as different parts of speech. They result in nouns being used as adjectives, adjectives as adverbs, and vice versa, in uninflected form: e.g.

(i) Nouns used as adjectives:

race problems, the most south point of Africa, places of history interest, the natives are brute, the native problem are danger.

(ii) adjectives used as adverbs:

they will talk bad (badly), beautiful decorated windows.

(iii) adverbs used as adjectives:

Our trainers are not so well, the generally meaning, (twice in the same essay.)

(iv) degrees of comparison:

the more greater become this problem, the beautifullest landscape, the greatest and important (most important) problem.

(v) pronouns,-form and case:

their selves, they self, them self, what a chance have us, all of we.

(c) Analogical Errors.

These are errors resulting from the misapplication or failure of analogy.

(i) Morphological changes wrongly applied:-

overpopulised, inspirate, controlate, natureous glory, some natives tribes (Afr. "naturelle") tribes, beautifulness, the developing (Afr. "ontwikkeling").

(ii) Analogical Errors due to confusion of Afrikaans and English usage.

(a) Singular-Plural usage:

the African are (? = "Afrikaner"), also: the European(s), the Coloured(s) (cf. Afrikaans usage.); many other country ("menige ander land?"); many/most other ("baie ander"); the other ("die ander" = others); the house of Parliament (Afr. "huis" or "gebou", cf. Afrikaans: "Uniegeboue", for Union Buildings).

(b) like, than, there, that:-

Such a warm climate like (= "soos") South Africa;

the best scenery than most/the most problems than;

In South Africa here are (Afr.: "hier" = Eng.: there);

It is here where ("hier waar" = here that).

These "analogical" errors coincide, in the majority of the cases, with points of dissimilarity in usage between Afrikaans and English and may, therefore, result from interlingual interference. This proves that in the case of vocabulary or word-selection difficulties the student is apt to seek the solution to his problems in the vocabulary and idiom of his native language.

The above examples also prove that the writer's choice of words is limited to those words he has actively mastered. This does not mean that he has mastered all their meanings, or has developed a feeling for the finer shades of meaning and the restrictions of usage that the native speaker has. This is clearly revealed in what I would like to call a "vagueness of thought" which results in the overuse of such innocuous, but unpleasantly meaningless expressions, as: you can find, or, you get; lots of; etc. In one of the essays you get was used seven times in less than half a page: "In the first place you get,then you get you get Blomfontein.. In S.A. you get many problems then you get Natal.... in Natal you get towns and in the Cape Province you get"

The lists of errors could have been made even more comprehensive, but owing to the individual nature of the errors, they have been limited to the more significant types of errors.

The types of errors indicate one of the major difficulties in the selection of vocabulary for the second language course, as well as one of the major sources of difficulty in acquiring an active vocabulary in the second language, namely, that "the mastery of a foreign language involves more than the mere association of meaning carried by a word in the native language with that carried by another word in a foreign language..... Individual

words usually carry more than one meaning. The total number of meanings a word carries in one language seldom coincides with all the meanings of a word in another language" (while) "words in one language which share one or more meanings with words in another language often function grammatically in different ways." (20)

Apart from the fact that many words can not be "translated" at all, sufficient evidence has been found in the course of this investigation to prove that translation, word by word, or a too heavy reliance on the practice of finding "equivalents" for the words of the language to be learnt in the home language of the student, does not provide for the differences in meaning, morphology, or distribution, of the words. Their acquisition into the "active" vocabulary of the student is seldom completely effective, since words take on their true meanings only when viewed in their proper setting, linguistic or otherwise.

Maturity in the use of vocabulary is, therefore, intimately associated with an increase in the quality of its use. This "quality" consists of: an increase in the number of meanings of the words, as well as in the precision with which words are used.

(c) ERRORS OF IDIOM AND TRANSLATION.

The errors of this category, which ranked fourth among the 9 sub-categories of error and second among the sub-categories of Class I, were responsible for 14.49% (909) of all errors, or 25.13% of the errors of Class I. (21)

If we admit, as Prof. French keeps on doing, (22) that students in writing composition exercises in the second language, think in the mother tongue and then translate as well as they can, we do not need to look further than that in order to find the main source of their errors. Errors may be ascribed to factors inherent in the nature of English structure, such as, the dis-

20. Yao Shen: Why No Translation, in Language Learning, Vol. III, Nos. 3 & 4, p.99 & pp.101-102.

21. Cf. Table VIII, p.63.

22. Cf. French, F.G.: Common Errors in English, p.8, p.27, etc.

tribution of the patterns of number to include demonstrative adjectives and verbs, (or the use of tenses in English). However, the "reorganisation of thinking and perception may extend much deeper than such changes," so that, if we were to seek for the source of errors in the expression structure of the language only, we would be ignoring "the real significance of the two-sided nature of language." (23)

We shall first deal with errors which may be ascribed to structural differences between English and Afrikaans:

(a) Errors of Agreement.

Errors of agreement, or the correlation of forms, were responsible for about 15% of the errors of this category. It may, therefore, be regarded as an important source of error (especially, if the errors of congruence in verb-forms were to be added to these) and, potentially, as an area of considerable learning difficulty:-

EXAMPLES:

(i) most of this places; this natives/people/things, etc.

this different kinds of people, this is mostly office workers, this is problems, etc.;

that problems/people/places;

those kind of people.

This is the most common error of agreement and is typical of the difficulty the Afrikaans-speaking student has in mastering the device of the correlation of forms in English. Afrikaans has only one form of the demonstrative pronoun, or demonstrative adjective, for use with both singular and plural antecedents (dit, die, hierdie, daardie) whereas English uses alternative forms: this/these; that/those; it/they, them. The most common error was the use of the singular form, it, after a plural antecedent: houses, problems, etc., were usually referred to as it, instead of they, these, those.

(ii) The second most common error of agreement

was the confusion as to use of that/who/which. This can also be ascribed to the interference of the mother tongue, e.g.:-

every country/South Africa/Johannesburg...his ("sy") leaders/natives/farmers.....which (in Afrikaans "wat" is used with persons as well as with objects).

We are one of the countries who,
the government.....he.

This looks like an error which may be ascribed to ignorance of the idiom of English, but it may also result from confusion of Afrikaans and English usage.

(iii) Our sunshine and veld are something ("iets"), they try to find a job in the cities ("werk"), we are like any other human being (all other...), People who have made their home in S.A. ("tuiste").

These errors may be ascribed to carelessness, though three of the above examples are probably due to wrong translation from Afrikaans.

(b) The Articles.

The articles, a/an, the, were an obstacle only when their idiomatic usage differed from that of the native language, e.g.

The problem of Ducktails ("Die probleem van eendsterte");

the life in South Africa ("Die lewe in");

the most problems/people, etc. (die meeste mense, ens.);

In the summer...("in die somer...");

The Valley of the thousand hills. ("van die");

in the future ("in die toekoms");

all places of historical value ("alle plekke");

and of better quality ("van beter kwaliteit");

we get all different nations in S.A. ("alle (verskillende) nasies");

the things we like the best ("die meeste van hou");

and when (the) one problem ("die een probleem");

that cannot be said of all countries ("van alle lande");

We as nation ("as nasie")

(c) Words Translated from Afrikaans.

These literal translations from the native language of the students supply further evidence of the interference of the mother tongue and they point to the fact that, besides being uncertain about the meanings of words, students are often completely unable to find "equivalents" for the words they would have liked to have used in the new medium. (Words were frequently used without attempting a translation. "Kruger Wildtuin" (4x) "Tafelberg" (3x) "Vrystaat" (2x) are examples of such words which occurred more than once in the essays.) Examples:-

sceneries, (natuurtonele). (this error occurred more than 40 times in the 100 essays, while a great many other "equivalents" were used, for this word, e.g. sights, scene(s) of, or from, nature, nature scenes, or, simply, nature, landscape, etc., worklessness (werkloosheid.) ;

we want to press down the natives.....,
the main city ("hoofstad" - 3 times in the same essay),

(S.A. is situated) in the southeren half-round (halfroond)

a small deal of the population (deel),
visitors from oversea (oorsee),
many few of us (baie min). (only once!),
my meaning is (opinie, mening (nie bedoeling nie),

the outstander (buitestaander),
a wild reserve ('n wildreservaat),
our pre-fathers (ons voorvaders) ,
the Combined Nations Organisation (Verenigde.),

the south point of Africa (die suidpunt),
therefor we thank Him (daarvoor),

If every South African work together (saam werk),
The Voortrekker Monument which the Voortrekkers

started by stapeling rocks on each other (stapel),
milk farmers (dairy farmers.),

murmeling streamlets (murmelende),

the other (die ander) - for others, or the others.

(d) "Idiomatic" interference.

"Idiomatic" interference is difficult to define except by quoting examples, since it is often a matter of knowing "which substitutions are permissible", and if the student does not know, or transfers from

the mother tongue, he is liable to fall into error:-
the people in South Africa are keeping them
busy with their own work;
so great costs are being made to get....,
our position are a little bit higher than those
of.....,
you cannot tell anybody how it looks like.....,
we have to see that we keep above them,
when they can get some more education.....,
On the other end/other side (aan die anderkant),
And not so similar to (like),
the Non-Europeans make out a very great deal
of the population.....
As we have told in the beginning,
bring many things in work ("in werking"),
(the Natives) want to be on level with us,
beautiful places like that is nearly known by
every South African.....,
in how a beautiful country we have the opportunity
to live in,
I hope it will go better as time pass,
they stand under the influence of.....,
I asked...what is the use for us to.....,
Here live together Europeans and....,
Cape Town with "Tafelberg" in the rear that can
by people on see long before.....,
they went all fu(r)ther into the interior...;
The African are twice as much as the European,
The rainfall and temperature takes off how
farther from the North to the South.....,
The natives in South Africa are far below the
white people.....

Sufficient evidence to the contrary is supplied
by the above errors to enable me to refute the as-
sertion of Prof. French that "a careful examination
of lists of errors thought by those who collected
them to be peculiar to their own regions, and to
be directly due to cross-associations and the inter-
ference of their local vernaculars, has not sub-
stantiated that assumption." (24)

It is true that many of these errors are indeed "common all over the world, without regard to vernacular, social and domestic environment, or methods of teaching." (25) Yet, if these are considered, together with those made in verb usage, word order and prepositional usage, they prove beyond any doubt, the extent of the influence of the mother tongue on the student's attempts to master a new language. Their occurrence has a great deal to do with methods of selection of language materials for the second language course, since practically everyone of these errors resulted from differences in word usage, or in idiom, between the two languages in contact in the mind of the student. They once more underline the importance of teaching not only the vocabulary and the structural patterns of the new language, but also which substitutions and combinations of vocabulary and structural patterns are allowable. (26)

In some of the essays literal translation from Afrikaans ran riot and only a reader who knew the mother tongue of the student could get anywhere near to understanding what the student was trying to say. For example, when a student writes that:

- (1) "Due to the course of the Europeans minority the natives are slowly in the upmarch of pushing the white man out of the country", we gather that the natives are slowly beginning to push the European minority of the population out of the country;
- (2) or, "the natives have no rights like voting, etc.", i.e. they do not have the right to vote.
- (3) "Because of all these mains (mines) we deliver the most minerals on eath (earth)" - (lewer die meeste minerale) i.e. we produce more minerals than any other country in the world.

"The people of our country are on the right way and I should like to see them over a hundred years. ("Die mense van ons land is op die regte

25. French, F.G.: op. cit., (2) p.5.

26. Cf. Dunkel, H.B.: op. cit., p.90.

pad(weg) en ek sou daarvan hou om hulle oor 'n honderd jaar (verder) te sien.") This is a neat word-by-word translation which does not contain a single structural error, and yet it is not idiomatic English.

- (4) "mines where minerals are digged out."
- (5) There is still considerable confusion with regard to the use of such words as: when, (~~if~~), as (~~if~~), as (= such as), like (= as), e.g. such a warm climate like S.A.), etc., and in each case this confusion can be ascribed to the fact that these words differ in usage from their Afrikaans "equivalents."

It is interesting to note at this stage that the arrangement of words in the basic patterns does not seem to present a serious difficulty to the Afrikaans-speaking student, but that it is the art of filling these language moulds that they find difficult.

(d) ERRORS OF OBSCURITY.

This was not one of the major error categories, it being responsible for a total of only 188 errors, i.e. 5.2 % of the Class I-errors, or 2.99% of all errors. Errors of this type were treated very leniently and only extreme examples were labelled "obscurities."

In terms of the function of language as a means of communication between individuals, these errors of obscurity amount to a complete breaking down of communication between the writer and the reader, and should, therefore, be regarded as the most serious of errors.

EXAMPLES:-

"Although I think that the Afrikaans-speaking section of our country - it's not right to say that I think so because it is so - is situated nearer to the history of our land"

"As a result of the variety in the population we always get difficulties in the various communications"

"In South Africa we also find many other kinds of people not in the form of structure, but several kinds of nations."

".....because South Africa is much in connection with certain aspects and occurrences."

"So we see South Africa as a country with many points which we should see and depend on in the future."

"The people of South Africa were a bit on a comparable step with the other Europeans....."

"As a democratic land will proceeds in growing, and while noticing all the proceedings one can be asure that the land have a good future."

These sentences defy all attempts to wrest from them their meanings, yet one cannot help noticing that this is not the result of inability on the part of the student to construct sentences, or to use the devices of grammatical structure, but of semantic and morphological difficulties.

(e) VERB ERRORS.

In this investigation verb errors ranked fifth among the sources of error, being responsible for 13.72% of all errors, while they ranked third among the Class I-errors committed by students.

According to certain aspects of verb usage in English, the errors were divided into three distinct types, viz.:-

- (a) Tense errors: These include the use of a wrong tense, as well as of a wrong sequence of tenses in sentences or in paragraphs.
- (b) Errors of Congruence: i.e. of agreement in number and in person between a verb and its subject.
- (c) Verb-form errors: i.e. the correct morphological forms of gerunds or participles as well as their correct use as participles, gerunds, etc.

T A B L E X.

TABULATION OF VERB ERRORS IN 100 ESSAYS, WITH RANKING.

Type of error	No. of Errors	Errors per Unit	% of Total verb -errors.	Ran-king	% of all errors.
Verb-concord	388	3.88	45.06	1	6.23
Verb-Tense	341	3.41	39.61	2	5.43
Verb-Form	132	1.32	15.33	3	2.1
TOTAL	861		100.0		

TABLE IX shows that Concord, or the correlation of forms, was the main source of verb errors, being responsible for 45.06% of the verb errors, or 6.23% of all errors. It is closely followed by tense errors (39.61% of the verb errors, or 5.43% of all errors.), while verb-form errors were responsible for 15.33% of the verb errors (2.1% of all errors.)

1. ERRORS OF CONCORD.

The most significant difference in verb usage between Afrikaans and English is that the Afrikaans verb has no inflections for number and person, and bears no relationship in number, or in person, to its subject. Owing to this structural difference in the verb usage of the two languages, the Afrikaans-speaking student is liable to find this exceedingly difficult. It was found in this investigation that errors of concord were responsible for 45.06% of the verb-errors committed by students, or 3.88 errors per student. Only six essays contained no concord errors, 16 contained only 1, and 60 essays contained 3 or more errors of concord.

EXAMPLES.

(a) Singular Subject - plural verb.

South Africa have many problems.....,
The government do.....,
Soil erosion/the atmosphere are,
Johannesburg are a city,
One problem which worry us ,
The A.N.C. which try/a land which have ,
There are the Indian problem/the National Park,
There are so much/not another land ,
the mineral wealth of S.A. are exploited.
nobody are allowed,
there are still enough work/so much to say,
What they think are right.....,
In some cases are the South African.....

(b) Plural subject - Singular Verb.

our rivers flows,
these countries has,
we has/they was,
The Bantu nations is,
Some of them is./ the people is,

The non-europeans is so.../is not....,
Many of the other nations thinks,
There was hard feelings/there is a lot of things,
There is two sides that's,
There is very few of us who has,
In South Africa is two generations, that is the..
In South Africa there's places,
People here, on the whole, is ,
Cities like Johannesburg has,
The rainfall and temperature takes off...

The errors listed above prove that the errors are not specifically related to some structural pattern or other, except that, perhaps, they are more liable to occur in the construction: "There is/are.....," or in sentences in which the S.V.O.(P) pattern is camouflaged by an adverbial phrase, or a clause which intrudes between the subject and its verb. They occurred freely in all types of sentences, taking the form of a singular verb after a plural subject, and its opposite, a plural verb after a singular subject, in a ratio of about 3:2.

That this type of error was found to occur in good essays as well as in bad ones, emphasises the fact that it is indeed a major area of mother tongue interference and, therefore, of learning difficulty, and one of the most tenacious of the breed of errors.

2. VERB TENSE ERRORS.

In 18 of the essays no tense mistakes were made, in 15 only one tense mistake was made, while 50 of the essays contained between 0 and 2 tense errors. The highest number of errors committed in a single essay was 26 (out of 68 verbs used in the essay, - the errors were due to a tendency, on the part of the writer, to switch from the Primary to the Historic sequence of tenses for no apparent reason.)

Four types of tense errors were noted, viz.:

(a) Primary - Historic tense sequence errors:-

South African people are white and they were called....,

When we travel we met many people who is ...
In South Africa we find people who talked
different languages. Therefore we had to study
and learned of....,
..... everybody had to know two languages,

There are places which could be,
Here in the Zoo you could see,
From here we go to the place where they kept,
One day we would be able.

(b) Historic - Primary tense sequence errors.

What kind of clothes the old Voortrekkers wear...
and the weapons they use.....,
When you went touring you can see.....,
The Europeans lived....and the rest are farmers...,
what was remarkable to them is our hostility,
(He) asked an Englishman where is Pretoria,
So I asked him what is the use ,
The places that they were visit are the.....

(c) Present Perfect and Past Perfect tense errors.

....came in 1652 and since that time they grew...,
....land of sunshine as so many called it,
During the last ten years....were the leaders... ,
Afrikaans is the loveliest language I ever heard.
The natives were always and will always be ,
They come to serve....and made S.A. their home,
....if the Portugese realised what they discovered ,
this problem were overcome after Dingaan was
defeated ,
One of (the problems) worried us from the time the
white man enters the country.

(d) Tenses (wrongly used, or meaningless).

I wonder if he (= Johannesburg) will be founded if
there was no gold reef.
Nobody are aloud (allowed) to steal and if he
done it he were hanged.
natureous glory is not being known to many..... ,
some of us have not been visiting the..... ,
to see to it that the young people are learning...,
The A.N.C. which try (is trying).

The four types of errors listed above represent
the main types of tense errors in an order of frequency,
(In 100 errors, from a random selection of essays, the
ratio of occurrence was: a: b: c: d. = 34: 37: 18: 11.)

With regard to types a and b an "error-pattern"
can perhaps be established for individual essays, but
this is of limited validity. Though mother tongue
interference cannot account for the errors of type a,

the use of the so-called "historic present tense" in Afrikaans was responsible for about 50% - 60% of the errors of type b; the remainder may be ascribed to carelessness.

The influence of Afrikaans tense usage is mainly responsible for the errors of type c, committed in using the Past Perfect and the Present Perfect tenses. The Pres. Perf. tense, which had to be used frequently in these essays, caused most trouble, the type of error being the use of the Past tense (as in Afrikaans), instead of the Pres. Perf. tense to indicate that "we do not imply any definite time in the past and are merely interested in the completed fact as we know it now." (27) The meaning of the Past Perfect tense is also rendered in Afrikaans by its Past tense, and students consequently fell into the error of using a Past tense in constructions requiring the use of the Past Perf. tense.

While the errors of type d confirm the truth of Prof. French's statement that "all the world is mystified by the English tenses," (28) they also show that students have not yet mastered all the intricacies of English tense usage.

3. ERRORS OF VERB-FORM.

Verb-form errors are errors made in using the morphological forms of verbs, e.g. the correct form for the past participle, in forming the Perfect tenses, or errors in using the gerund, infinitive, or present participle in constructions requiring the use of these verb-forms.

Errors of verb-form were responsible for 15.33% of all verb errors, or 2.1% of all errors committed in the essays. In 48 essays not a single error of this type was committed, while only 37 of the essays contained more than one verb-form error. The student who committed most tense errors (26) committed only 3 verb-form errors, while the student who committed most errors of concord (14) didn't commit a single verb-form error. The above figures, therefore, prove that high school students of English as a second language can memorise

27. Allen, W.S.: Living English Structure, p.81-82.

28. French: op. cit., (2)., p. 23.

these forms, an opinion which is borne out by the results of Dr. Van Vuuren's verb-form test which returned an average of 72% - 74% correct answers to a verb-form test. (29)

EXAMPLES OF VERB-FORM ERRORS.

(a) Auxiliary verb with a wrong form.

can be find/assure, can notices, could be clean
out;

can came; must fought.

(b) The verb "to be" with a wrong form.

will became/went/been (2), (in the same essay);
is devide/concern (2)/are concern, (in the same
essay);

will be find, are find; can be find (in the same
essay);

are call/intrest (interest)(2), could be clean
out, (same essay);

was build, had not see, (in the same essay);

is know (3 times in the same essay).

(c) Wrong forms for tenses.

do compare/visit, (as Indef. tenses - same essay);

does it make (it makes), do become/hate, did

bring, (as Indef. tenses - same essay);

the sun shines not, (Afr. - "skyn nie");

what a lovely place isn't it (Afr. - "is dit nie");

had take (in context for Afr. - "geneem het").

(d) Isolated errors (diverse):

the castle build by....;

if he done.....;

were catched;

didn't seen;

is been uttered.

(e) Gerund and Infinitive.

the greatest problem is that to keep;

the population...is busy to increase;

what is the use for us to trie....;

the problem to divide....;

there is one way to stop this and that is to work;

opportunity to build, proud to have, enjoy to

visit, (in the same essay).

Errors of type a may be regarded as careless errors, while those of type d may be ascribed to ignorance (or carelessness). The same cannot be said of types b and c, they may be due to carelessness on the part of the student, but the fact that the same type of error was often repeated in the same essay indicates that these errors are related to areas of non-understanding of specific aspects of English verb usage.

The most important single area of learning difficulty was the errors made in using the gerund and participial constructions (type e) which were responsible for approximately 30% of the verb-form errors. This can be ascribed to mother tongue interference, since Afrikaans mostly uses an infinitive ("om te"....) where English uses the participial construction.

4. GENERAL DISCUSSION OF VERB ERRORS.

Though Jespersen claims that in the use of its tenses English is "far more consistent and logical than any other European language", the verb usage of English was found to be the largest single field of structural difficulty and source of error in these essays.

The following table (TABLE XIa,b,c,) shows the numbers of errors of different types in:

- (a) the 14 essays in which fewest verb-errors were committed;
- (b) the 15 essays in which most verb-errors were committed;
- (c) those essay in which most errors of each of the three types were committed:

T A B L E X I.

(a) 14 ESSAYS IN WHICH FEWEST VERB ERRORS WERE COMMITTED.

CONCORD	TENSE	VERB-FORM	TOTAL.
0	0	0	0
1	0	0	1
1	0	0	1
1	0	0	1
0	1	0	1
2	0	0	2
2	0	0	2
0	2	0	2
1	1	0	2
1	1	0	2
2	1	0	3
1	0	2	3
3	0	0	3
1	2	0	3

(b) 15 ESSAYS IN WHICH MOST VERB ERRORS WERE COMMITTED.

CONCORD	TENSE	VERB-FORM	TOTAL.
2	26	3	31
6	11	4	21
4	13	3	20
8	9	3	20
5	9	5	19
14	4	0	18
11	5	2	18
5	9	3	17
5	9	2	16
10	6	0	16
3	10	2	15
9	1	5	15
9	6	0	15
3	10	2	15
4	5	6	15

c(i) 11 ESSAYS IN WHICH MOST CONCORD ERRORS WERE COMMITTED.

CONCORD	TENSE	VERB-FORM	TOTAL.
14	4	0	18
11	5	2	18
10	6	0	16
9	1	5	15
9	6	0	15
8	4	2	14
8	3	3	14
8	4	0	12
8	2	1	11
8	0	0	8
8	0	0	8

c(ii) 12 ESSAYS IN WHICH MOST TENSE ERRORS WERE COMMITTED.

CONCORD	TENSE	VERB-FORM	TOTAL.
2	26	3	31
4	13	3	20
6	11	4	21
3	10	2	15
5	9	5	19
8	9	3	20
5	9	2	16
5	9	0	14
6	8	0	14
3	7	3	13
2	7	3	12
1	7	0	8

c(iii) 11 ESSAYS IN WHICH MOST VERB-FORM ERRORS WERE COMMITTED.

CONCORD	TENSE	VERB-FORM	TOTAL.
4	5	6	15
5	1	6	12
5	9	5	19
9	1	5	15
4	6	5	15
2	4	5	11
0	0	5	5
6	11	4	21
6	2	4	12
6	0	4	10
1	5	4	10

From the above table (TABLE XI)it is clear that no general "pattern" of verb errors could be established from the essays.

- (a) Congruence (cf. TABLE XI,c(i)) or the agreement in number and in person between the verb and its subject, is the most difficult single aspect of English verb usage for the Afrikaans-speaking student to master. A study of the types of errors of congruence, proves that this is due to the fact that Afrikaans does not make use of this structural device at all.
- (b) Tense errors (cf. TABLE XI, c(ii)) should be ascribed to the fact that English not only has more tense-forms, e.g. Perfect and Continuous tense forms, than Afrikaans, but that the use of the tense forms derives from and is based upon a "sociocultural context" that is different from that of the Afrikaans-speaking student.
- (c) Verb-forms (cf. TABLE XI,c(iii)) as such can be, and should be, mastered by memorisation. The correct use of verb forms, especially those that differ in usage from the mother tongue of the student, can only be acquired by dint of practice.
- (d) In verb usage, mother tongue interference is a factor of considerable importance.

(f) ERRORS OF PREPOSITIONAL USAGE.

Prepositional usage, ranking sixth among the nine categories of error (cf. TABLE VIII, p.63), was responsible for 2.97 errors per student, or 4.73% of all errors. Of the errors of Class I, prepositional usage ranked fourth, being responsible for 8.21% of the Class I-errors.

The relatively low incidence of prepositional errors found in this investigation, shows that Afrikaans-speaking students have mastered English prepositional usage reasonably well by the time they leave school. The errors committed in the essays were mostly related to the restricted usage of prepositions with certain words.

Dr. J.A. Venter states that: "Afrikaans uses its prepositions in a way that is very similar to English. In many cases it is possible to point out an Afrikaans preposition which can, without further ado, quite properly be used to translate the English word. These prepositions are a matter of straight forward vocabulary definition, and cause the second-language teacher very little trouble." (30) It was, however, often found in this study that the use of a preposition translated from Afrikaans betrayed the student into committing an error. If the student made use of analogy, he was likewise betrayed into error, and between 80% and 90% of the errors were due to the transfer of Afrikaans prepositional usage onto English, through analogy and translation.

Examples of Prepositional Errors.

1. Prepositions wrongly Transferred from Afrikaans.

- (i) on: "op" Indians work on the sugar plantations,; cruel on the natives, on the background, on one or another place, proud on/on which we are proud;
- (ii) from: "van":- huts made from mud, people from the olden days;
- (iii) in, into: "in":- people in S.A./other countries, (S.A.) is divided in provinces, (S.A.) has come in the hands of....;
- (iv) Other: the ducktail mode under the youngsters ("onder"), the fault lies at the Europeans ("by"), the fault lies by their parents ("by"), S.A. is known by many ("by", = "aan");

supply/provide of (= "van");
invite for tea (= "vir");
honest towards himself (= "teenoor" = with).

2. Prepositional Phrases translated from Afrikaans:-

(the Europeans) are / good for the native (goed vir),
over a hundred years (Oor ('n) honderd jaar,
In the last years (In die laaste jare),
In a state to fight (in 'n staat om oorlog te maak),
of the side of (van die kant van),
on the southern side of the earth (aan die.....),
all further to (into) the interior (al verder na die).

3. Prepositions omitted (as in Afrikaans):-

the majority/minority Europeans, (no prep. in Afr.)
in the whole South Africa, (" " " ")
ask him help, (" " " ")

4. Redundant Prepositions:

the Union consists out of(of),
in how beautiful a country we live in,
to discuss about everyone ('praat oor'),
from since long ago.

5. Using the wrong Eng. preposition. (non-analogical):-

Non-Europeans are on the majority....(in),
(S.A.) is known by (for),
for the disposal of(at).

I conclude with another brief quotation from Dr. Venter's thesis, to complete that given on page 87. "Unfortunately usage in the two languages often diverges sharply. Some English prepositions such as at really have no separate equivalent in Afrikaans..... Once the student has learned to equate an Afrikaans word with a particular English preposition, he is naturally inclined, by the workings of analogy and transfer, also to use it in those cases in which it is not appropriate".⁽³¹⁾ The truth of this statement is proved by the examples listed in sections (1) - (4). above.

(g) ERRORS OF WORD ORDER.

Of the nine categories of error used in this investigation, errors of word order ranked ninth, (cf. TABLE VIII, p.63) being responsible only for 1.39 errors per

31. Venter, J.A.: op. cit., p.81.

essay, or 2.22% of the total number of errors. In 26 essays no word order errors were committed, while 33 essays contained only one error of this type, i.e. in only 41 essays did students commit more than one error of word order, and only in six of these did they commit 4, or more, errors of word order.

Examples.

(1) and (2) below are the errors committed by two of the students in their essays.)

(1)is English an official language. ("is Engels.."),
....took all business affairs over. ("het.....
oorgeneem"),
....it has also its (2), ("het/ook"),
they live also among....("woon ook...."),
they have still their....("het nog").

(2) people that always is.... (wat altyd....is.),
You find here two races ("vind hier"),
....the native has now to work ("moet nou werk."),
Farming is not today.... ("is nie vandag"),
They are as far as the other group are concern
in between.
And so become these problems. (so word.....).

(3) Other examples.

....take energetically part in....,
....if we all, As a rule are the Afrikaners,
Also the....and the....are visited ("Ook....word.."),
....but like Shakespeare in his book King Henry V
said....

The low percentage of errors shows that the fact that Afrikaans and English are cognate languages does seem to simplify the student's task of mastering the basic patterns of word order of English. This statement is supported by Prof. French's observation that "it is to be noted that pupils everywhere have no difficulty at all in suppressing their vernacular word-order in favour of English word-order". (32)

However, the types of word order errors committed by students clearly show the extent of the interference of the mother tongue. The most common error of word order coincides with a structural difference between

the two languages, viz. in the word order patterns of the "pre-verb or frequency adverbs"⁽³³⁾ - also, still, never, etc., e.g. "South Africa also has its....," but "He has also seen. (Afrikaans: "S.A. het ook"; "Hy het ook".) The errors in word order in the ordinary S.V.O.(P) pattern occurred when students translated directly from Afrikaans into English (see 3 above), and can be ascribed to carelessness rather than to ignorance, since, even in unidiomatic and meaningless sentences,⁽³⁴⁾ errors in the use of the basic structural patterns were rarely made.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF CLASS II-ERRORS.

(a) GENERAL DISCUSSION OF CLASS II-ERRORS.

The fact that 2,658 Class II-errors (i.e. 26.58 errors per student) were committed in the essays clearly reveals a lack of proficiency on the part of the students in writing English.

The ability to write a language has been called "the acid test of literacy," and this is precisely how I regard it. The errors of this class reveal not the mastery of vocabulary and idiom of the writers, or their ability to use the structural devices of the language, but their proficiency in handling the traditional writing system of the second language, i.e. its conventions of spelling and punctuation as these are used to represent speech by means of visible symbols. It is, therefore, a skill in its own rights and its mastery demands as rigorous a programme of teaching as that of mastering the spoken language.

In the process of rendering speech as writing by means of a set of symbols, punctuation takes the place of pause, stress and pitch in the spoken language. It is, therefore, organic in nature. Unless students are taught how to use the diacritical marks of punctuation to perform this function, they cannot gain insight into the nature of sentence construction when writing the language, or the organic nature of its conventions of punctuation.

33. Allen, W.S.: op. cit., p.98.

34. cf. Section c & d of this chapter pp.75 & 76.

In Table XII a tabulation is given of the Class II-errors, or orthographical errors, found in this investigation, with percentages and ranking.

T A B L E XII.

TABULATION OF CLASS II-ERRORS, WITH PERCENTAGES AND RANKING FOR THE CLASS AND FOR ALL ERRORS.

	Number of Errors	Errors per Essay	Percen- tage of Class II	Rank- ing	% of all Errors	Ranking (all Errors)
Spelling	1272	12.72	47.86	1	20.27	1
Punctuation	1194	11.94	44.92	2	19.03	3
Sentence Con- struction	192	1.92	7.22	3	3.06	7
TOTAL	2658	26.58	100.00		42.36	

Of the 9 categories of error spelling ranked first with a total of 1272 errors, or 20.27% of all errors, while punctuation ranked third among the error categories with a total of 1194 errors, or 19.03% of all errors. If the errors of sentence construction (3.06% of all errors), which may be regarded as the most serious form of punctuation errors, are added to these, punctuation and sentence construction would together rank first among the sources of error and be responsible for 22.09% of all errors.

These figures show a measure of agreement with those of other South African investigators.⁽³⁵⁾ Stander found that spelling errors ranked second among the sources of error, being responsible for 20.01% of the errors. In Marks's study, spelling errors ranked third at 17.41% of his total number of errors, while in Visser's study spelling errors were responsible for 44.3% of the errors of his category of "Technical Errors".

In both Stander's (26.25% of the errors) and Marks's studies (36.39% of the errors), errors of punctuation ranked first. In Visser's study they also ranked first among his "Technical Errors", being responsible for 55.6% of the errors of this category.

35. Cf. the discussion of these investigations in Ch. II.

(b) SPELLING.

Of the 9 types of errors spelling ranked first, yielding a total of 1272 errors, or 20.27% of all errors committed in the 100 essays. It also ranked first among the errors of Class II, being responsible for 12.72 errors per unit, or 47.86% of the errors of this class.

Different classifications of spelling errors have been made by other investigators, e.g. Stander classified spelling errors into 13 categories, while Van der Westhuizen distinguished only 8 classes. Examples of all the different types of spelling errors mentioned by these and other investigators were found in the essays I have examined. No common rule can be laid down for English spelling and, therefore, no common source of error can be indicated. The errors are of an individual nature and, therefore, hardly predictable, so I have decided to use only 4 categories of spelling errors.

(i) Words spelled as in Afrikaans :

- (a) These were mostly names of towns, rivers and Native tribes.

Bloodriver/Bloedriver	Kango caves
Vaaldam (and others)	Voortrekker monument
Orange Freestate	Mount Auxausus
Zoeloos	Basutoes/Basuto's
Indiër people (only once)	Betsjoeanas
Grikwas	French Hugenote

- (b) Closely related to this group of words are names which were given in Afrikaans, mostly without using inverted commas:

Wildernis	Tafelberg
Voortrekkermonument	Vrystaat
Kruger Wildtuin	S.A.U.K.

- (c) Names of towns, etc., for which a wrong English spelling was used:-

Conco/Congo caves	Cape peninsula
Kruger National game reserve	Oudshorn
Springboks	Tabelbay
Valley of <u>the</u> thousand hills	Pieter Maritzburg
Cape province/provence	Africaans/Africaners

Orange Vree State South-Africa/Afrika(2)
Europenes/european/european
non european/non-European/nun-European
Coulerds/Colours/Colourds (very often).
Afrikaans speaking English speaking

(d) The influence of the more phonetic spelling of Afrikaans was also apparent in misspellings like:-

tradisions, nasional, discoverd, sentrum,
docters, ekstremists, whiteman, gold mains.

(ii) Pronunciation spelling, or phonetic spelling:-

sciens	diament	plesure
intellegent	oppertunity	intrest
desemal	opotunity	exept
simelar	acording	fiew
porrage	discribe	wepon
weat	mor-a-less	persue
egrecultural	civelised	reson

mutch/ritch serrounded/serounded
sence/senery/scenery's tipe/style
citicense/siticen gouvernement/goverment/
govnment.

(iii) Analogical Spellings.

These derive from various sources:-

(a) confusion of homophonic words:-

there/their	to/too
hole/whole	it's/its
grate/great	colitions/collisions
<u>piece</u> (peace) that is <u>rheining</u> (reigning).	

(b) spelling differences between words due to differences in grammatical function:-

life/live	there/their
it's/its	(where/were)
full for ful in harmfull/carefull.	

(c) Singular and Plural spellings:-

industry's	factory's
city's	country's
themselves	ourself/ourselves
wifes	thiefs
scenaries/scenery's	

(d) the retention of a familiar spelling for a sound group as an element of a compound word:

alltogether	allways
tryed	(also c, above)

This often led to wrong separation or linking of words, e.g.:-

after wards	in to
a other/an other	to day/to-day
their selves	now a days
sothat	eachother
fore fathers/fore-fathers/forfathers.	

(iv) Misspellings due to ignorance and carelessness.

In defence of the heading of this category which may seem to imply a criticism of the work of the teacher, I have to state that it was the kinds of spelling errors committed by students (who had passed the final school examination!) that prompted this classification. The inability of students to spell, for example, the plural forms of nouns ending in -y, the misspelling of the most elementary words, (in one of the essays we was spelled whē every time it was used, and that was 11 times!), reveal a shocking ignorance of English spelling in general and a lack of pride on the part of students in their own ability to spell. The following is a list of errors which have not been classified, and cannot be classified, into any useful pattern of misspellings:-

ofer	dont	diverent
vifty	comon	reson
gaol's	acording	triompf
propblems	altough	earlyer
motor biks	visators	jenerations
ansistor	primative	ductail
beatiful	visable	Duck Tail
beatifull	mejoraty	polotical
aqainted	responsable	bushfelt
succeded	mystereous	posibilities
opperated	businesses	dissapear
inhibitants/inhabetants	for instants	
juviline delinguessy	watervalls	

The majority of the errors may be ascribed to the fact that students are not well enough acquainted with written English. Although they use books all their lives, they do not become spelling conscious and do not do enough towards the development of their spelling ability through conscious effort on their part. Carelessness may be regarded as major cause of spelling errors.

For the teacher the best approach to the teaching of spelling seems to be that of teaching the spelling of words required for written exercises, supplemented by a rigorous programme of spelling drills and dictation tests. G. Hildreth suggests that "Provision must be made for individualization of instruction as well as for systematic drill..... By the time pupils reach the high school they are assumed to be mature in spelling habits, but there is still considerable evidence of difficulty with commonly used words.....spelling must continue to receive attention in the high school and beyond....." (36)

(c) ERRORS OF PUNCTUATION.

In both Stander's and Marks's investigations, errors of punctuation ranked first, while in Visser's study they were responsible 55.6% of his category of "Technical Errors." In this study errors of punctuation ranked third among the 9 categories of errors and second among the errors of its own class, yielding a total of 1194 errors, or 44.92% of the Class II errors. If errors of sentence construction are added to the punctuation errors, these two categories are responsible for 52% of the Class II errors, and together they would then rank first among the sources of error.

(i) THE COMMA.

In each of the three investigations mentioned above errors in using, or abusing, the comma were found to rank first. Visser found that a little less than 50% of the punctuation errors were made in using the comma. In the present investigation comma-errors were responsible for very nearly 75% of the errors in punctuation.

36. Hildreth, G.: op. cit., p.191 & 262 (italics by me - A. de B.)

The following types of errors were common, and are given in an order of frequency:-

(a) Commas omitted with words and phrases in parenthesis.

they are as we know a colourful nation...(are, know,),
any sport like for instance in the...(sport, instance,),
The Europeans or white South Africans are...
(or, are),
Another problem and a very serious one.. (and... one,),
South Africa the baby of all countries has
(the...countries,),
As already said (?) S.A. is...(said,...),
Johannesburg on the other hand is...(,on...hand,),
....the prettiest city of all Pretoria and not far from Pretoria we find the biggest city namely Johannesburg the city..... (,Pretoria, ...and,...,Pretoria....,Johannesburg, the),
South Africa in the second place provides (, inplace,),
the natives on the other end are (, on, are),
and now three hundred years later we (, threelater,).

(b) Commas omitted before conjunctions requiring a comma, or after an adverbial clause or phrase at the beginning of a sentence.

If that is so I want.... (,I),
Like any other land South Africa (land,),
.... a beautiful land but with many problems
(, but),
.... places which if once seen will..(, if.. seen,),
Although the government do much for them they...
(, they),
As (If) we think....we (, we),
at Bloedriver where there is also a monument
(, where),
not only interest in their own land but...(, but),
as the land improves the more greater (, the),
As I have said this is..... (, this),
Therefore when somebody wants to know something of this all he has (,when ,he).

(c) Omission of commas to separate enumerated items.

the house of Paul Kruger the Voortrekker monument all the museums etc. (, the ,all ,etc.)

we can have a look at the museums the houses of Parliament the caves and all these places (, the, the, the, and)

the four provinces in which South Africa is(word omitted) Transvaal Cape Freestate and Natal. (, Transvaal, Cape, Freestate, and)

Contrasts in places in nature and in its people (, in, and)

(d) "Comma-Spraying".

Few students indulged in what Carey calls "comma-spraying", i.e. the random use of commas, though most students sinned by not using commas where they should have been used (see a, b, c, above.)

The place that is most visit by people, of other lands, in South Africa, is the...

(The Voortrekkers) had to fight, for their lives, to keep our land.....

There is no place in South Africa, where the people who see it, are.....

....the natives are not the same as us, and that, we can prove.

Though it is not "comma-spraying", students exhibited a fondness of using commas before the conjunction and, e.g.:

Sometimes I think we have, and get things to easy here, here is not as big an competition

....interfere with our problems, and most of the time.....

(ii) THE FULL STOP AND other marks of Punctuation.

The full stop and other marks of punctuation, e.g. the semi-colon, dashes (instead of commas), and inverted commas, were together responsible for about 25% of the errors of punctuation. The semi-colon was hardly ever used, dashes even more seldom, and inverted commas were left out with Afrikaans words (which should not have been used!), notably the names of towns, provinces, etc., when these were not written with the English spelling.

- (a) Full stops were very often used instead of commas. This type of error usually resulted in an error of sentence construction and will be discussed in the following section.
- (b) The second type of error was that of not using full stops where they should have been used. In these long sentences "the complex structure of (the) sentences is, in many cases, a complexity due to confused thinking and lack of ability to recognise violations of unity and of clause construction."⁽³⁷⁾ The following is an example of this type of error:-

"It is also the duty of every South African to read about our own problems, and to know what is going on, but the trouble is there are lots of people who are stubborn and don't want to see in the future, and if they go on the way they do, white and black will most probably sit on the same seats at school, ride in the same busses and live in the same hotels."

- (c) The third type of error is that of using full stops too frequently. This results in the use of too many simple sentences, (a practice unworthy of the matriculated student).

"Cape Town is the capital of the Cape province. This is where Jan van Riebeeck landed in 1652. It is a big city with about 10 thousand people. Pretoria is the capital of Transvaal. This is where we find the Union Building and the Voortrekker Monument. It is not a very big city although it is a very beautiful city. It has a good climate throughout the year. It is one of the oldest cities in South Africa.

Bloemfontein is the capital of the Orange Free State. It is the biggest town in the O.F.S. That is where you can find the supreme court.

Pietermaritzburg is the capital of Natal. etc."

37. Wiswall, Z.E.: A Study of Sentence structure in Eighth Grade composition (Elem. School Journal, Vol. XXVI, no. 3, Nov., 1925, p.448.)

Capitalization, which is often classified as an error of punctuation was not regarded as such by me. It is, I think, an error of spelling if students fail to use capitals in writing proper names and adjectives derived from proper names. If a capital letter is used after an error of punctuation, e.g. a full stop used instead of a comma, it is still not wrong. The error is that of using the wrong mark of punctuation and the capital letter was, therefore, disregarded. The writing of proper names and of adjectives derived from proper names should, I suggest, be taught separately.

It is apparent, from the above examples, that students have not yet grasped the essentially organic nature of punctuation. It cannot be used correctly unless they realise what the function of punctuation is in the rendering of speech as visible written symbols.

(d) SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION.

Sentence construction ranked seventh among the categories of error and was responsible for 3.06% of all errors (1.92 errors per unit), or 7.22% of the errors of Class II.

Although, from the above figures, it may seem that this is not a major, or even an important source of error, it is necessary to emphasize this aspect of the writing skill of the second language student, since it is responsible for overmuch hesitation, halting speech, and the use of the redundant, "You see....", "you know...", "Well,...." and other unpleasant characteristics of the speech of second language students.

Even sentences that were technically correct, often showed weaknesses of construction which, though they could not be marked as errors, betrayed the impotence of the writer to write easily and fluently - an elementary principle of "style" that few students seem to have mastered. An example to illustrate this, is the following paragraph:- (See also (ii) a, b, c, above).

"But alas, every country also has its own problems. No country wants his problems to be the worst. Every country wants his problems to be the smallest. But South Africa has its problems."

EXAMPLES OF SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION ERRORS.

(a) Clauses written as sentences.

This error was the result of the overuse of full-stops.

- i (The Congo Caves) are a great attraction to visitors. Because it is seldom that you get a place like the Conco Caves. But to come back to history. In Maritzburg.....
- ii (Of the Kruger National Park) you could not see enough. Because every time you.....
- iii (In South Africa)lots of problems. And one of.....
- iv If we take England. For instance, there it....
- v we do not live with them. Because we.....
- vi (People came) to try their luck here. Therefore we get various races..... But during the years.....
- vii The sea are wonderful at Durban. But if you go on a tour it must be along the coast. Because then.....

(b) Non-sentences and Elliptical Sentences.

.... Then the various historical places such as the Voortrekker Monument near Pretoria and others in the Cape as the "Jan van Riebeeck" monument.

Speaking of mines. In S.A. is.....

Our holliday places are also of the best. The South Coast for the winter holliday, the West Coast for the somer.

(Cape Town) surrounded by historical places. The Castle the only one of its kind in Africa. Great Constancia, and al the other places the cableway for those who wants to have a good look of old Capetown.

You find here two races. The European and the non european.

And now the problems.

These examples of faulty sentence construction are

related to errors in punctuation in the same way as the obscurities are related to errors in idiom.

They are extreme examples of the abuse of punctuation which results in incongruencies of sentence structure. They confirm a previous statement in regard to the mastery of the basic structural patterns of the language, viz: the structural patterns, or units, within the sentence were seldom wrong, but they were badly or wrongly fitted together. This statement is corroborated by that of Dorothy Bagley that: "the first of the items of language construction which, judging by the percentage of error and error quotients, give most trouble to children.....(is) the sentence as a unit - the complete thought."⁽³⁸⁾

The trouble with the Afrikaans-speaking student seems to be that he thinks in Afrikaans and being a mature speaker of Afrikaans, he uses a type of sentence structure that is far above his "youthful" proficiency in wielding the structural mechanism of the English language. The process of "translation" should, therefore, in reality, include a mental process of simplification, in order to enable him to fit the thought to a much simpler mould. This, I think, is one of the main reasons for the "grogginess" of sentence construction: their power of reasoning (which is done in Afrikaans) outstrips their skill in wielding the vocabulary and the structural mechanism of the second language.

The above statement is confirmed by Prof. French when he states that: "In difficulties about sentence construction, he (the student) has sets of patterns in his mind, but he is insecure in allotting patterns to duties according to the English model. Therefore he applies such rules and analogies as he possesses, so that his units are correct in themselves but incorrect in that particular setting."⁽³⁹⁾

If, in addition to these difficulties, the student is hampered by spelling difficulties, the effort of writing down speech may easily degenerate into an ordeal, and his written composition into a jumble of loosely

38. Bagley, D.: A Critical Survey of the Objective Estimates in Teaching English.....

39. French, F.G.: op. cit., p.22.

and wrongly constructed sentences. More time and attention should be given to a programme of written exercises, designed to develop the student's ability to express himself in writing as well as in speaking the second language.

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C H A P T E R I V .

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

A. GENERAL REMARKS.

n (a) It is obvious that though the group of students whose essays have been examined are representative of the students annually admitted to a particular course at one of the Training Colleges for Teachers of the Transvaal Education Department, this investigation should be regarded as a preliminary research into the active proficiency, in the second language, of matriculated students. Conditions elsewhere in the Transvaal and in South Africa may differ appreciably from those at this Teachers' College. For instance: a great many of the students have not got University exemption and may, therefore, not be admitted to a University.

(b) Although only 100 essays were examined, the investigation yielded valuable and useful data and sufficiently revealed the deficiencies in the second-language proficiency of these matriculated students to allow for some conclusions to be drawn with regard to their ability to use the second language actively.

(c) A comparison of the data of this investigation with those of other investigators of the second-language proficiency of Afrikaans-speaking pupils in primary and secondary schools (vide: Chapters II & III) shows a measure of consistency as to the frequency of certain types of errors. This should be regarded as evidence of the validity of the present investigation. Language proficiency tests, e.g. standardized objective language tests, may show that other groups of matriculated students are more, or less, proficient in the second language. The data of this investigation reveal a fairly general trend in the weaknesses and shortcomings of matriculated students' active command of the second language.

(d) The fact that the students had to write on one given subject only, did not perhaps provide sufficiently for individual differences in range of vocabulary, or in ability to handle the structural mechanism of the second language, or in spelling ability, to mention

only a few aspects of language ability. Not all people have the same interests, or the same ability to express themselves, even in their home language. All the students could not, therefore, be expected to be able to express themselves equally well on the subject of this composition.

(e) In the course of this investigation I realised that there are a great many factors which determine both the type and the frequency of the errors committed by students. These vary in range from psychological factors, e.g. spelling disability, through a series of subjective factors, e.g. individual differences and attitudes, interest, etc., to educational factors, pertaining to the standard of second language teaching in the classroom, the contents of the course, the teaching of the specific skill of writing the second language, etc. Adequate control of only the factors mentioned above would require the co-operation of a panel of research workers and, therefore, obviously falls outside the scope of this investigation.

(f) It is perhaps necessary to qualify the use of the term "active proficiency" in view of the claim that the essays may be regarded as a fairly accurate indication of the students' active proficiency in the second language.

This can be done by a consideration of what has been said about the nature of language in the first chapter of this study. Man can only write down what he has already mentally organised into "speech" in terms of the semantic and structural systems of the language he is going to "write".

If we apply this statement to the written compositions of students of a second language, it means that they can only write as well as they can actively use the language. Therefore, if we regard writing as a picture of speech, we have to make a distinction between what the student writes, i.e. the words he uses and how these are used and arranged in accordance with the system of organisation of the language in order to communicate his thoughts to the reader; and how he writes, i.e. whether he is able to create an intelligible "picture" of what he wants to communicate with the aid of the writing system of the language. Hence the division of the errors into the two main classes of error

used in this study. These may be called linguistic, or "speech" errors, and writing, or orthographical errors.

B. THE SECOND-LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY OF THE STUDENTS
WHOSE ESSAYS WERE EXAMINED.

In drawing conclusions from the data of this investigation, as well as in the making of recommendations, I shall mainly limit myself to the facts and figures given in the previous chapter. However, if perhaps something is said for which no evidence can be found among these facts and figures, it should be regarded as the fruits of over 16 years of experience as a teacher of English to Afrikaans-speaking students in primary schools, high schools, and at a College of Education, and of a great deal more reading on the subjects of linguistics and second-language teaching than will appear from the bibliography.

(a) The average of 36.17 Class I errors per essay, or 57.64% of the total number of errors, is indeed revealing of the difficulties students still have in actively using the second language at a stage, which in terms of the aims of second language teaching as formulated by the different Departments of Education, must be considered as the end of the road. After passing the final school examination, pupils are passed on to employers or to institutions for higher education as "matriculated" and, therefore, able to meet certain requirements with regard to their prospective fields of employment, or courses of study. One of the most important of these requirements is that they are expected to be "bilingual". Most employers take this to mean that they must be able to understand, read, speak and write both official languages correctly.

(b) A division of Class I-errors into the six categories of error reveals that two of these, word-errors (33.81%), and errors of idiom and translation (25.13%), were responsible for almost 59% of the errors of this class, and more than one-third (33.98%) of the total number of errors committed in the 100 essays.

A careful consideration of these two types of errors will show that, of the errors committed in writing the essays, these are by far the most important

since they truly reveal the weakness, or the strength, of the student's active command of the second language.

Prof. French states that: "The plain fact is that when a pupil sits down to write a 'composition exercise,' he is limited in his expression to the few hundred words which he retains at the threshold of his memory, available at immediate recollection; therefore, more or less consciously he turns and twists what he wishes to say in his own language, until he can fit it to the content of the English words he has at his command." (1)

From the essays and the number of word-errors committed in writing them, it is clear that most students had all too few words at "the thresholds of their memories." The difficulty presented by the English names for the different racial groups and Native tribes (and their spelling) together with the students' inability to express themselves in English on the elementary facts about South African life and places of interest, show that students are but poorly acquainted with what is being written, in South Africa, about South African affairs. They apparently seldom read English newspapers and periodicals, or listen to broadcasts and news bulletins in English.

The names of such well-known places as the Kruger National Park, the Valley of a Thousand Hills, and the Drakensberg mountains, were often given wrongly and misspelt. Our "great" problem invariably was the "native problem" (for: Native problem), but such words as Bantu, Bantu territories, segregation, tribes, housing schemes, to mention only a few, were seldom used. The only other problem that was mentioned in the majority of the essays, was that of "ducktails" (sometimes "ductails"), but the term "juvenile delinquency" was used in only two essays, and then with sadly mutilated spelling (juviline delinguessy, juvenile delinqince). The Cape Coloureds were referred to as "Capies" (slang), "Colourds," and even "Colours" and these words were often written without a capital letter. For Non-Europeans, nun-Europeans or non(-)europeans were current spellings, while the names of Bantu tribes

1. French, F.G.: op. cit., p.26-27.

were usually spelled as in Afrikaans.

Like the standard VI compositions examined by Dr. Fourie, many of these essays, too, revealed "such a paucity of vocabulary",⁽²⁾ that there is no doubt that students were hampered in writing the essays by the inadequacy of their vocabularies. It was also observed that, the poorer the student's command of English, the more laboured his writing became, so that there is a definite correlation between the quality of the writing and the thought content of the essay. We may then conclude with Prof. French "that until the mastery of English has reached a point far beyond the reach of the ordinary school-leaver, there is no such thing as 'free composition'. When a student is set to write an essay, the task resolves itself into an exercise, not in composition, but in translation. He thinks, in the vernacular, of all the things he would like to be able to say, but the job of translating them is beyond his powers."⁽³⁾

The problem is that we cannot know what a student is trying to say; we can only know what he succeeds in saying, and it is by this that he has to be judged.

These essays cannot be regarded as accurate or exhaustive tests of active vocabularies of the writers, but they should be regarded as fair indications of their vocabulary range. The fact is that vocabulary more readily lends itself to specialization than any other aspect of language proficiency, and that the selection of structural patterns for the teaching of a second language is a far easier task than that of selecting a basic vocabulary of adequate coverage. Agard and Dunkel came to the conclusion that even a basic vocabulary of 5,000 words was not to be regarded as adequate, "since above that level there are many words daily used that belong to the non-technical vocabulary of the language."⁽⁴⁾

From the evidence of this investigation it is clear that the students need a considerably larger

2. Fourie: op. cit., p.41.

3. French, F.G.: op. cit., p.27.

4. Agard & Dunkel: op. cit., p.300.

vocabulary, with a corresponding extension of knowledge of syntax, morphology, semantics and idiom, in order to counteract the influence of the mother tongue, and to enable them to "think" in the second language. The student who thinks in his mother tongue and finds the "job of translating.....beyond his powers" cannot be expected, when he has to cast his thoughts in the patterns and idiom of the second language to seek for analogical patterns amongst those of the second language. It seems illogical that, while he uses the mother-tongue vocabulary and its patterns as his original medium, he will abandon what comes so readily and naturally to him in favour of the less familiar patterns of the second language.

(c) This interference of the native language is always a critical point since it at no stage disappears entirely or can be wholly overcome and it affects the receptive as well as the active phases of language proficiency. To look for areas of learning difficulty only in the language to be studied, as Prof. French suggests,⁽⁵⁾ may yield useful information, but the negation of the interference of the structural and other peculiarities of the native language, leaves to the investigator only half his field of investigation. The errors that could be traced to their sources in the native language of the student in this investigation, indicate the as yet undetermined extent of this field of research and investigation.

Interference was found to relate to the expression structure of the language as well as to its content structure ⁽⁶⁾ and its vocabulary, or, in the words of Prof. Lado: "individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings, and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture - both productively when attempting to speak the language and to act in the culture, and receptively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and the culture as practiced by natives."⁽⁷⁾

5. Cf.: French, F.G.: op. cit., p.27.

6. Cf.: Gleason, H.A.: op. cit., p.7 & p.12-13.

7. Lado, R.: op. cit., p.6.

The first type of interference is predictable in terms of the phonemic and structural patterns of the language if a scientific comparative description of the two languages (native and second language) can be made. In saying this, I am reiterating the statement made by Prof. Fourie that "experimentation must concern itself with the language matter to be taught as distinct from the method of teaching it."⁽⁸⁾ The fact that such experimentation has to take the form of a comparative analysis of the two languages and of their respective cultures, represents the most recent and most significant advance in the field of second language teaching.⁽⁹⁾

Evidence of interference has been sufficiently established by this investigation (cf. the detailed discussion of errors in the previous chapter) to justify a comparative study of the two official languages of the Union of South Africa in order to determine the full range of interlingual interference.⁽¹⁰⁾ We agree with Prof. Weinreich that these differences and similarities "must be exhaustively stated for every domain - phonetic, grammatical and lexical - as a pre-requisite to an analysis of interference," and should "include, among others, a picture of the degree of 'a priori' structural homogeneity of the languages in contact and the precedents for borrowing in each"⁽¹¹⁾

8. Fourie: op. cit., p.17.

9. Cf. Lado: op. cit., and also the works of Weinreich and Haugen, as well as numerous articles currently published in Language Learning and other language journals which testify to the value of such comparative studies.

10. Cf. English Studies in Africa, Vol.2, No.2., A Note on Cape English Idiom - L. Herman, and Vol.3, No.1., Quaintness in Pauline Smith - C. Eglington. In these articles a few aspects of Afrikaans influence on English are discussed.

11. Weinreich: op. cit., p.2.

(d) Each of the different types of errors would merit a full-scale investigation of the scope of that conducted by Dr. J.A. Venter into the differences in prepositional usage between Afrikaans and English.⁽¹²⁾ Any attempt by a single investigator to investigate all the varied aspects of active proficiency in writing the second language can do little more than to indicate the need for further and more intensive research in connection with the two languages involved in the bilingual set-up in South Africa. Writing a language involves very nearly every aspect of language proficiency, even the sound system and the production of its sounds (as revealed by certain types of spelling errors); juncture (as revealed by certain types of spelling and punctuation errors); and stress (as revealed in the use of elliptical sentences and certain types of sentence constructions aimed at achieving specific speech effects.)

This would make possible the selection and grading of language materials in terms of what students should not find difficult in second language learning and what should be considered as areas of learning difficulty.

It was found in this investigation that, contrary to the general belief that the structural patterns of a language are more difficult to master than its vocabulary,⁽¹³⁾ the correct and "idiomatic" use of the words (vocabulary) and the idiomatic expressions of the second language gave most difficulty to Afrikaans-speaking students of English and were responsible for the majority of the errors committed by them. The relatively low incidence of errors of word order (2.22% of the total number of errors, or 3.84% of the errors of Class I) proves that the Afrikaans-speaking student of English at this stage of his development does not have great difficulty in mastering the basic structural patterns of English. They do have difficulty in (a) filling these language moulds with meaningful words, and (b) fitting simple patterns of, for example, the Subject-verb-object type, together correctly to form longer, complex and compound sentences.

12. Venter, J.A.: English Prepositional Usage.

13. Fries, C.C.: op. cit., pp.2-3.

An explanation for this phenomenon, I think, is that the greater sophistication of thought of the adolescent requires for self-expression (a) a more extensive, active vocabulary in the second language, and (b) a greater sophistication of sentence structure. Since the student is capable of more mature use of both vocabulary and sentence structure in his home language, the process of translation, which is often what his effort at self-expression in the second language involuntarily and unconsciously amounts to, leaves him the task of simplifying what he wishes to say, in his own language, until he can fit it to the stock of the English words and structural patterns he has at his command.

It is, therefore, evident that more attention should be given to the patterns for complex and compound sentences and that these should be drilled more thoroughly, with particular attention to the student's ability to use the pattern actively, and to vocabulary with which to "fill" the pattern. Deliberate and systematic teaching of vocabulary and idiom seems to me to be as necessary as the teaching of the structural patterns of the second language. More attention should be given to memorisation of words, set phrases and idiomatic expressions, and to practice in using these orally, in conversation lessons, debates, etc., and afterwards in sentences, paragraphs, compositions, and other written exercises.

(e) Active proficiency in a language requires mastery of its expression structure and of its content structure and vocabulary, and is represented by two separate skills:-

- (a) the ability to organise the materials of communication, i.e. the content structure and the vocabulary of the language, in accordance with the conventional structural patterns of the language, and
- (b) the ability to use the content structure and the vocabulary of the language as a means of communication - this implies mastery of word-meanings and of idiomatic usage.

As the student progresses along the "continuum" of growth in second-language mastery, this latter skill

becomes more important. The problem of the second language student is not that of the apprehension and interpretation of reality - that is a 'fait accompli' the moment he is confronted with it: it is done in the mother tongue which is his primary linguistic medium for the apprehension and interpretation of reality and experience, just as it is his primary medium for communication.

Therefore, if he should at some point attain a mastery of the basic structural patterns within the limits of a basic vocabulary,⁽¹⁴⁾ our task thereafter will be the expansion of his knowledge of the content structure and vocabulary of the new language. This investigation has proved that, as far as active proficiency in writing the second language is concerned, the basic need of this group of students is: experience in experiencing experience in English. This can only be achieved by means of a course of teaching which will supply the students with vocabulary and idiom and a knowledge of the structural patterns of the second language that will enable them effectively to communicate experience in English. They cannot use the second language effectively as a language, i.e. as a means of communication, in relating an experience or in communicating an idea or an impression of a complexity anywhere near to that that they constantly express with the greatest ease in their native language. They do their "thinking" in Afrikaans, because they lack the ability to do so in English, and in the process of translation they fall into error. But, and this to me is a more serious matter, they are short of words and uncertain as to verb usage, prepositional usage, etc. Therefore, this process of translation degenerates into a process of mental simplification of structure and idiom of which the outcome is the type of immature expression quoted on page 98.

C. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

The suggestions and recommendations contained in this chapter have not been stated exhaustively.

14. Fries: op. cit., pp.2-3.

Fourie: op. cit., pp.24-31 & pp.40-41.

They have been made in connection with only those aspects of second-language proficiency in which students were found wanting, and then only to indicate a line of approach which may be explored and developed by the teacher, or an aspect for which provision should be made in the syllabuses for the teaching of the second language. There are many roads that lead to Rome, and there is no "royal road" to second-language learning or teaching.

1. THE SELECTION OF LANGUAGE MATERIALS FOR THE SECOND-LANGUAGE COURSE.

In the second-language course two kinds of materials are needed:-

- (a) The basic structural patterns of the language (if it is to be taught by the aural-oral method, or audio-lingual method, the phonemic and phonological patterns - the features of pronunciation enunciation, stress and slur, tune, and rhythm will have to be included here.)
- (b) The materials with which to fill these linguistic moulds, i.e. words and their meanings and the patterns of idiomatic usage of the structural patterns of the language as well as of its vocabulary, e.g. participial phrases, gerund and infinitive constructions, prepositional phrases, etc.

The language materials⁽¹⁵⁾ should be selected and graded in accordance with the student's needs in terms of the function of the second language as a second medium of communication at each stage of their development and not in terms of the totality of the structural patterns, vocabulary and idiom of the target language. At each stage of the student's mental and linguistic development, the second language should be useful to him as an effective medium of communication and of the apprehension of experience. It should never lag so far behind that he is unable to express himself in the new medium except by resorting to the use of babyish words and elementary patterns the use of which he has long since outgrown in his mother tongue.

15. Cf. Fourie: op. cit., pp.22-24.

The selection of both "grammar" (structural patterns) and vocabulary and idiom should be made on the bases of:-

- (a) frequency of usage, and
- (b) usefulness to the interpretation of experience and to the active use of the second language as a means of communication.

Frequency of usage and the range of coverage of the language materials should, therefore, be of the most important criteria for selection.

Another important factor in the selection of language matter is that of ease or difficulty of learning. It has been found in this investigation that these two matters are closely related to points of similarity and difference between the two languages in contact in the mind of the student, as is indicated, for example, by the relative insignificance of errors of word order in relation to errors of verb usage.

This can only be determined by means of a comparative study of the systems of grammatical structure, vocabulary, etc., of the two languages - the native language and the second language. It has, for instance, been found in this study that students have succeeded in mastering the peculiarities of the S.V.O.-pattern of statement, but that at this stage in their development they need practice in fitting together these simple sentence patterns into longer complex and compound sentences.

Since language is "de gietvorm van de gedachte" (Sapir), the student's use of a second language is always, in a way and to a greater or a lesser extent, a process of translation. The subject matter (and the method of teaching) should be such as will aid him in this process of experiencing reality and communicating experience in the new medium and thereby obviate the need to resort consciously to the first language and thence to proceed to seek for "equivalent" structural patterns and vocabulary in the second language.

2. THE TEACHING OF THE SECOND LANGUAGE.

(a) THE METHOD OF TEACHING.

- (i) "Language, like tennis, is not a knowledge but a skill, a matter of immediate unconscious

reaction acquired only by practice".⁽¹⁶⁾ The method of teaching should, therefore, aim at inculcating and developing this skill by dint of practice. In order to develop skill in actively using a language, the student must work towards that kind of automatic control of grammar and vocabulary that enables the native speaker to manipulate his language with no hesitation and with perfect accuracy. To acquire the same degree of automatic control of the second language it is necessary that the language should be used as medium during lessons and that the student should be given an opportunity of using it himself as much as possible.⁽¹⁷⁾

(ii) THE PATTERN-DRILL LESSON, OR
"GRAMMAR" LESSON.

The pattern-drill lesson, or "Controlled Conversation" lesson,⁽¹⁸⁾ is designed to teach the student the "grammar" of the second language, or its structural patterns. For this purpose one or more of the basic sentence patterns are selected, e.g. the S.V.O., direct statement sentence pattern. These pattern sentences are loaded with items of structure, e.g. tenses, concord, etc., and vocabulary, and have to be memorised by the students to a point of spontaneous, correct recall so as to establish the pattern in the minds of the students.

However, if the teacher stops at this point, he has not even achieved half his task. As soon as the basic pattern has been mastered sufficiently well, attention should be directed to the student's ability to use the pattern, i.e. to fill the pattern frame with his own vocabulary and so to express his thoughts.

In its simplest and most elementary form this can be achieved by means of a controlled exercise in substitution, requiring the substitution

16. West, M.P.: How much English Grammar, in E.L.T., Vol.VII, No.1.

17. This method of teaching foreign languages is known by many names, e.g. oral method, direct method, the informant-drill technique (Prof. Mario Pei.), the aural-oral method, or the audio-lingual method.

18. Cf. T.E.D. SPEECH EXERCISES....etc., p.3., also, The Bennett System Teacher's Work Book (Grades - Std.V., Series).

of different items of vocabulary by others to take the place of the subject, verb, or object, in the original pattern sentence. A more advanced, and a more useful form, because it requires the active use of vocabulary and structural pattern, is that of requiring the student to produce an entirely different sentence on the model of the pattern sentence. These two types of exercises enable the student to "activate" the structural pattern and thereby induce active proficiency in the language.

As the student progresses, the pattern drills on the basic structural patterns should become fewer and shorter, while more and more attention should be given to the development of the student's ability to use the structural patterns as vehicles for his own thoughts. Structural patterns should also become more mature in order to meet the requirements of the student's linguistic and mental development. Expansion of structural patterns and the combination of basic patterns in complex and compound sentences should be practised in order to attain maturity of sentence structure in the second language.

(iii) TEACHING VOCABULARY.

Vocabulary learning and the growth of an active vocabulary should be regarded as a studial aspect of language learning, i.e. it should be consciously taught and items of vocabulary and idiomatic usage should be memorised by students. The student should be required to memorise a certain amount of words and idiomatic expressions weekly, or fortnightly, and learn and practice to use these correctly in sentences of his own composition. This should be regarded as a basic vocabulary of words and their meanings, and idiomatic expressions which every student is expected to know. Record should be kept of these by the student and the teacher throughout the course.

The teaching of the structural patterns and vocabulary should be integrated into an effective language course developed on the basis of a cyclic progression. The "free" conversation

lesson, or speech lesson, is of relatively little educational value except as a means of testing what has been taught in a series of controlled language lessons. "Free" conversation, like the free composition exercise, should be a matter of controlled language activity, in which control is exercised through vocabulary perhaps rather than through limiting the student to the use of one or a few structural patterns. Growth in vocabulary beyond the range of the basic vocabulary should be encouraged and deliberately sought, yet it should at the same time be regarded as the privilege of the student who reads much or has the opportunity of speaking English outside the classroom.

It is further suggested that more attention should be given to the works of South African authors, and that the lists of prescribed books for intensive and extensive study should include more works by recognised South African English writers, e.g. Olive Schreiner, Pauline Smith, Lawrence Green, T.V. Bulpin, and others. To these should be added South African magazines, periodicals and newspapers. The second language syllabus should also be correlated with the other school subjects, and English radio-broadcasts for schools should sometimes be listened to. This should aid pupils in acquiring an active vocabulary in the second language with which to express themselves about those things they daily come into contact with and aid the process of "cultural orientation" which is such an important aspect of second language learning. Knowing how to say it in English is the best safeguard against mother-tongue interference.

(iv) TEACHING VERB USAGE.

The teaching of the grammar of the second language by means of pattern sentences provides an excellent opportunity for the systematic teaching of the verb usage of English. However, the fact that the two languages involved in the bilingual situation in South Africa differ so widely in verb usage, makes the understanding of the conventions of English verb usage an extremely difficult

matter to Afrikaans-speaking students. To attempt to teach tense usage by naming the tenses is not the most effective method.

Understanding of tense usage can only be achieved by knowing when a tense is used, i.e. by learning it in a situational context.⁽¹⁹⁾ The teacher should see to it that he creates, with the aid of time-words and time phrases, pictures and other aids, a language situation for the use of the tense, that is so clear-cut that it will not only elucidate the use of the tense, but will force the student to use only the required tense. With regard to the sequence of tenses, this may be embodied in the patterns for complex and compound sentences and taught with the aid of these. Students' attention should also be directed to these in the readers or prescribed books they have to study.

Concord, to the non-native speaker of English, is something that has to be consciously remembered whenever he uses the language. In this study errors in concord provided most convincing evidence of the amount of thinking still done in Afrikaans by these matriculated students. Constant drill and deliberate teaching seem to be called for, but errors in concord and tense usage will only disappear when the student has acquired the skill of "thinking" in the second language.

(v) TEACHING THE SKILL OF WRITING THE SECOND LANGUAGE.

It has been one of the fundamental assumptions of this study that the ability to write a language is a skill in its own rights. It requires two entirely different abilities, viz. that of spelling and that of punctuation. It is speech that has to be written down and, therefore, the ability to write a free composition exercise in a language presupposes active proficiency in the language.

No writing system of any language can faithfully reproduce and represent its sounds, though it consists of a set of symbols and groups

19. Cf.: Carroll, J.B.: The Study of Language; p.184.

of symbols used to represent the sounds of speech. These the student has to be able to use correctly if he wants to write the language. Likewise, each language has its own set of conventions for the use of the diacritical marks of punctuation to represent features of speech, such as pause, juncture, stress, etc. These have to be used correctly in order to recreate these features of the spoken language and to render the written communication intelligible to the reader.

It is evident from the rate of incidence of Class II, or orthographical errors, that the students whose essays were examined have not succeeded in mastering English spelling sufficiently well, nor have they achieved understanding of the organic nature of punctuation. This may be attributed to the preponderance of the spoken language in the method of second-language teaching. It has led to a neglect of specific instruction in the art of written expression in the language. Just as the student has to master the art of using the structural patterns of the language and its vocabulary as vehicles of self-expression, even so has he to master its spelling and punctuation in order to express himself in writing.

(vi) THE TEACHING OF SPELLING.

English spelling is notoriously difficult and the sooner students and teachers of English realise that it can only be acquired by memorisation, the sooner will spelling improve. The time-honoured method of dictation tests should be revived in the second-language classroom. Lists of spelling words should be compiled by teachers and pupils, not only for separate classes, but for the complete course. As in the case of the vocabulary list, the criteria of selection should be those of frequency of use and of usefulness. Since all written work should be an application of oral work, spelling-words should be gleaned from oral lessons and provide for the needs of subsequent written language exercises.

1. The memorisation of a small number of spelling-words should be a matter of daily routine.

2. In the compilation of the lists of words, attention should be given to such matters as similarity in form, and provision should be made for revision and repetition in order to ensure effective retention.
3. Dictation tests should become a regular feature of the teaching of the second language - daily oral spelling tests and bi-weekly or weekly written tests.
4. These should be of two kinds: word tests and sentence or paragraph tests. (The latter may then be used as punctuation tests as well.)

(vii) THE TEACHING OF PUNCTUATION.

1. In the reading lesson the student's attention should be directed to the use of punctuation and it should be exploited in the teaching of reading.
2. The teaching of punctuation should be correlated with that of spelling, as well as of all written exercises.

(viii) THE WRITTEN LANGUAGE EXERCISE.

Composition writing is really the privilege of the advanced student, but "free" exercises in writing the language can take many forms. Even in the primary school the writing of sentences by pupils should be encouraged. By the time the student comes to the high school, he should be able to write paragraphs on the theme of an oral language lesson. From the paragraph he has to proceed to the short composition. The fill-in type of language exercise may be useful to weaker pupils, but if we want pupils to acquire fluency in writing, the better procedure should be that of supplying the key-words and phrases and setting the pupil the task of embodying these in a short paragraph.

All composition work should be preceded by oral drills and oral preparation and no composition should be set and, if set, can be of any real value to the student, unless he commands an adequate vocabulary to enable him to deal with the subject. This has to be provided during the oral language lessons, or oral composition lessons.

If composition writing is to strengthen and develop the student's active command of the language, more compositions should be written in order to achieve fluency in writing. Exercises in paraphrasing and precis writing are not only useful as exercises in comprehension. They are to be regarded as useful exercises in composition. Rapid writing on easy, familiar subjects may be more useful than spending much time over the writing of an essay on a difficult and unfamiliar subject.²⁰

All the suggestions made in connection with the teaching of the second language, e.g. on pattern drills, vocabulary teaching, spelling and punctuation, have been made with a view to strengthening student's active command of the second language. If these suggestions are put into practice, they should also help the student to improve his skill in writing the language.

D. TEACHING ENGLISH TO TEACHERS IN TRAINING.

To the second-language teacher a near-perfect command of the language is indispensable. If he is to teach effectively and act as "informant" and model to his class, he should be fully bilingual and conversant with the most effective methods of teaching the language skills.

It is apparent, from the data of this investigation, that students, after spending one of the eight terms of their two-year course of training at College, still need a great deal of practice in the following:-

- (a) The structure (grammar) of the language - so as to acquire facility and precision in the use of basic structural patterns, especially in the use of these in complex and compound sentences.
- (b) The vocabulary of the second language - in order to acquire a larger vocabulary, a knowledge of the meanings of words and their idiomatic use.
- (c) Practice in using the language itself as a medium of communication - so as to overcome the inhibitory interference of the native language. This, together with a larger vocabulary and knowledge of the grammatical structure of English, should help to counteract mother tongue interference.

- (d) Practice in writing the second language in order to achieve fluency and better expression in writing. In order to be able to write English better they need to be taught spelling and the use of punctuation.

Since the students are non-native speakers of English and the period of training is short, the following are suggested:-

- (a) Teaching a second language to beginners and primary school pupils is the work of a specialist teacher. In view of developments all over the world in connection with the teaching of modern languages, as well as of the established practice of subject-teaching in South African high schools, serious consideration should be given to the introduction of this system of subject teaching with regard to the teaching of the second language in primary schools.

I shall motivate:-

- (i) The teaching of the second language is a national concern, since bilingualism is the basic requirement of good citizenship. Pupils are, therefore, entitled to and should receive the very best instruction in the second language that can be made available to them.
- (ii) Methods of teaching modern languages have become highly specialized and may be said to be based on the ability of the teacher to use the language actively as medium of instruction more than on factual knowledge about the language which may be acquired from language text books.

The teacher is required to act as model and "informant" to his class. This investigation has discovered but a handful of students whose command of English is such that they can, in two years' time, be trained to the desired standard of proficiency in order to meet the requirements of second language teaching,

viz:- Proficiency in the (second) language.

Experience in methods of teaching.

Acquaintance with teaching materials. (20)

To these requirements should be added that of cultural orientation through extensive reading and the study of literature.

(iii) Under present conditions, if the status quo is maintained with regard to the teaching of the second language, the following are recommended:-

1. That the duration of the training course for language teachers should be at least three years.
2. Alternatively, that only students whose command of English, on being admitted to the College, is such that they can in two years' time be trained to become fully bilingual, should be trained as teachers of English. All students should, however, receive instruction in the English language in order to achieve maximal bilingualism.
3. In view of the fact that students need instruction in the language itself to the extent revealed by this study, tutorial groups should not exceed 10-12 students. This will enable lecturers to give individual attention to students and will make possible the application of modern techniques of language teaching at the Training College.
4. Training College language classrooms should be provided with modern equipment so that the most up to date techniques of language teaching may be adopted. An indispensable and essential part of this equipment is a "language laboratory", which can provide facilities for individual self-expression and drill to larger groups of students.

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APPENDIX.QUESTIONNAIRE.ENGLISH ESSAY (FIRST YEAR STUDENTS).22nd April, 1959.SUBJECT: "South Africa - Its People, Places, and Problems!"LENGTH: 450 - 600 words.TIME: 1 hour.

1. NAME: Mr./Miss.....
2. DATE of BIRTH:..... GROUP:.....
3. FINAL SCHOOL EXAMINATION:.....
4. PASSED:.....(year).
5. ENGLISH LOWER/HIGHER GRADE,.....
6. RESULT:.....(Symbol/percentage).
7. NAME OF HIGH SCHOOL:.....
 TOWN/CITY:.....
 PROVINCE:.....
8. LANGUAGE MEDIUM OF SCHOOL: A E A&E (underline).
9. SUBJECTS (if any) TAKEN THROUGH MEDIUM OF ENGLISH.

10. NAMES OF OTHER HIGH SCHOOLS ATTENDED DURING THE LAST
FOUR YEARS BEFORE LEAVING SCHOOL:.....

11. RECORD OF PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT:
 a) during holidays only/ permanently. (underline)
 b) Name of firm/s.....

 c) Kind of work done by you.....

 d) How often did you have to speak/write English here?
 Usually/ very often/ frequently/ seldom/never (underline)
12. RECORD OF PREVIOUS STUDIES (e.g. at a University/College)

 (please supply details)
13. How often did you speak English out of school?
 Usually/ very often/ frequently/ seldom/never (underline)
14. How often is English spoken in your home?
 (by your parents/ friends/ yourself)
 Usually/ very often/ frequently/ seldom/never (underline)

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