CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.

2.1 Historical Background of Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis

The origins of Contrastive Analysis were pedagogic. The strongest motivation for doing it is the practical need to teach a second language in the most efficient way possible and this involves the development of the best teaching materials. Fries and Lado are considered the forerunners of Contrastive analysis (CA). Di Pietro (1971:9) however finds some CA examples as early as 1892 in Grandgent’s work German And English Sounds. According to James (1980:8), modern CA starts with Lado’s Linguistics Across Cultures but it was the studies of immigrant bilingualism by Weinreich (1953) and Haugen (1956) that gave Lado his impetus to produce his seminal work. Selinker says that Fries gave an insight into modern CA in 1945 in his book Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language:

The most efficient materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner. (1945:9)

Lado made the link between this quotation and CA explicit. In his Linguistics Across Cultures, Lado pointed out that what was implied in Fries’s statement is the fundamental assumption of CA that:

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

Lado laid down the groundwork for the theory and methodology of CA. His book *Linguistics Across Cultures*, which is considered by many linguists as the founding text provides useful tools for a comparison of the source and target languages. Lado (1957:vii) believed 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.

This hypothesis of transfer and the belief that CA could predict the difficulties that a second language learner might encounter while learning the language was predominant beginning in the post-war years until the late sixties when interest for it began to dwindle due to criticisms which arose after this hypothesis was submitted to empirical investigation. Its rejection was also the result of growing enthusiasm for the Error Analysis hypothesis in the seventies. As James (1994:179), a strong supporter of CA put it: “The earliest criticism of classical CA came from EA, which offered itself as the natural heir.”

2.2 The Behaviourist Learning Theory

a. Introduction

Research in L1 acquisition has greatly influenced study in L2 learning both in theory and at the practical level. Before the 1960s the
dominant language learning theory was the imitation and habit-formation theory of the behaviourist approach. The tenets of this theory were also adopted by L2 researchers but there is an additional complicating factor to account for in L2 learning, that is, the fact that the second language or foreign language learner already possesses a set of earlier habits, his native language habits.

When the behaviourist view of L1 acquisition was replaced by Noam Chomsky's linguistic theories, which propounded that a child has an innate creative capacity to construct his knowledge of the language, L2 researchers also began to view L2 learning from the same perspective. The new techniques developed for collecting and analyzing children's speech were also used to collect data about the processes involved in L2 learning. We thus see the tendency for researchers to adopt a single theory of language acquisition that can account for first and second language learning, as both these activities are manifestations of man's capacity to learn and use language.

b. Role of behaviourist psychology in language learning.

Contrastive Analysis was constructed within the behaviourist framework. The behaviourist learning theory is a theory of learning in general. It stresses the importance of habit formation. A habit is a link between a particular response and a particular stimulus. It is formed when there is a regular association of a particular stimulus with a particular response. John Watson, a psychologist, said that the existence of the stimulus would prompt a response, which would become automatic
if the stimulus happened frequently enough but B.F. Skinner argued that a habit developed when a response to a stimulus was regularly followed by a behaviour. This consequent behaviour reinforced the habit and helped to strengthen the association between the stimulus and the response. It is observable and automatic. It is automatic when the stimulus behaviour is imitated or copied sufficiently for it to be performed spontaneously. Thus habit-formation occurred where there is imitation, reinforcement and repetition of behaviour. (Ellis, 1985:21)

To the behaviourists, language is a behaviour, not a mental phenomenon. Their theories of habit formation were applied to language learning, first in L1, then in L2 acquisition. To learn his mother tongue, a child imitates the utterances made by adults. His attempts at using language would be rewarded or corrected by approval or some other reaction. To get more of these rewards, the child repeats the utterances and these become habits that constituted the language the child is learning. This habit-formation theory of the behaviourist psychology that was used to explain how a child learned his first language was also believed to be applicable to second language learning.

According to the adherents of behaviourism, previous habits that have been entrenched in the mind of a person as the first language can exercise an influence on the course of L2 learning. A learner transfers the structures, sounds and usage of his first language into the second. There are two kinds of transfer. When the habits of L1 and L2 are similar, there is positive transfer. For example, in declarative sentences, the English pattern of subject-verb-object sequence (The boy washes the
*car* is similar to French (*Le garçon lave la voiture*). An English speaker learning French would not encounter much difficulty here. However if the object is replaced with a pronoun, transfer is not possible as the order remains the same in English (*The boy washes it*) while in French the object pronoun comes before the verb (*Le garçon la lave*). The English speaker learning French will be predisposed to say *Le garçon lave la* and so an error occurs. This is called negative transfer. Negative transfer is generally known as interference. Interference is the result of proactive inhibition. Proactive inhibition is the way in which previous learning hinders the learning of new habits. Thus differences between L1 and L2 lead to interferences. Interferences cause learning difficulties and consequently errors. On the other hand, similarities between the two languages facilitate learning and thus no errors will occur.

According to the behaviourist learning theory, errors were evidences of non-learning and were considered undesirable. They should be avoided. To eliminate the chances of errors occurring, attempts were made to predict when they would occur and to this end, the Contrastive Analysis procedure was developed.

### 2.3 Contrastive Analysis

Contrastive Analysis was developed to help teachers of a foreign or second language to teach as efficiently as possible. It is defined by Hammer and Rice (1965) as "a systematic comparison of selected linguistic features of two or more languages, the intent of which is ..... to provide teachers and textbook writers with a body of information
which can be of service in the preparation of instructional materials, the planning of courses and the development of classroom techniques.” In Lado’s words (1957:2): “the teacher who has made a comparison of the foreign language with the native language of the students will know better what the problems are and can better provide for teaching them.”

The contrastive analysis hypothesis developed out of the behaviourist-inclined L2 learning theories and the structuralist linguistics of the 1950s. It borrowed the notions of “transfer” and “interference” from psychology and applied them to L2 learning. In CA, the difficulties and errors that occur when we learn and use a foreign language are caused by the interference of our mother tongue. When a structure of the foreign language is similar to the structure of our mother tongue, “positive transfer” takes place and we will not encounter any difficulty. On the other hand where the two languages differ “negative transfer” or interference occurs. This interference might cause difficulty in learning and error in performance. Lado stated that “Those elements that are similar to his (the learner’s) native language will be simple for him and those elements that are different will be difficult.” (Lado, 1957:2) The bigger the differences there are between the two languages, the greater the difficulties would be. When a CA of L1 and L2 is carried out, the difficulties between the two languages can be discovered and then a prediction made of the difficulties that a learner would encounter. Teaching materials can then be constructed based on the results of this analysis.
Wardhaugh (1970) pointed out that the contrastive analysis hypothesis exists in a strong and a weak form. The strong version is *a priori*, and the weak version is *a posteriori* in its treatment of errors. The strong form claims that we can predict L2 errors by identifying the differences between L1 and L2. According to this version CA can provide all the information needed for developing teaching materials. As Banathy *et al.* put it:

The change that has to take place in the language behavior of a foreign language student can be equated with the differences between the structures of the student's native language and culture and that of the target language and culture... Differences between the two languages can be established by contrastive linguistic analysis... What the student has to learn equals the sum of the differences established by CA.  
(1966:37)

Many linguists whose research showed that many of the grammatical errors made by L2 learners could not be traced to L1 later rejected this strong form. They found out that many errors predicted by CA did not materialize. On the other hand, those that were not predicted occurred. They concluded that L1 is not the sole and probably not even the prime cause of errors. Dulay and Burt (1973) attributed only 3% of learners' errors to L1 interference. They suggested that interference might be a major factor only in phonology. However research carried out by Gauberg (1971), George (1972), Tran-Chi-Chau (1975), Mukattash (1977), Flick (1980) and Lott (1983) showed that the percentage of errors due to L1 interference to be much more than the figure given by Dulay and Burt (in Ellis, 1985: 29). The mean percentage was 33%. This
discrepancy is likely the result of a lack of well-defined criteria for establishing which grammatical utterances constitute language transfer. Wardhaugh (1974:12) thinks that "the strong version seems quite unrealistic and impractical" while "the weak version does have certain possibilities for usefulness" though this "is suspect in some linguistic circles."

The weak version of the hypothesis has the same point of departure as error analysis, that is, from the errors committed by learners. From a corpus of the target language used by students, actual errors are first identified i.e. an error analysis is done of this learner language. Then CA is applied to identify which errors are caused by L1 interference. In other words the role of CA is explanatory rather than predictive and the role of L1 in the occurrence of errors is less important. Jackson (1979) mentioned in an article entitled "Contrastive Analysis as a Predictor of Errors, with Reference to Punjabi Learners of English" that Krzeszowski also claimed a lesser role for CA as early as 1974:

The pedagogical value of CA is becoming less and less obvious and the solution therein more and more removed to a remote area near the horizon. The best that contrastive analysis can do is to predict areas of potential mistakes without making any claims as to whether or not and in what circumstances they are likely to occur in actual performance. (in Fisiak, 1981:197)

Jackson (in Fisiak, 1981:204) demonstrated that "a contrastive analysis can both predict areas of potential error, even if not pinpoint
errors, and that it can provide the explanation of a great number of errors that arise from the interference of the mother tongue."

Dušková (1969) in her research on the sources of errors in foreign language learning of Czech students enrolled in an English course noted that her students’ errors are not only due to negative transfer or rather the nonexistence of certain features in the mother tongue but also to confusion between forms and functions of the target language. Her investigation also revealed that her students made few errors involving items, which were obviously and predictably difficult. This phenomenon can be explained in terms of the learners’ operation of the “avoidance strategy”. Learners avoid the difficult item by paraphrasing or circumlocution. Consequently Dušková concluded that Contrastive Analysis might be profitably supplemented:

by the results of error-based analyses, particularly in the preparation of teaching materials......... A further improvement of teaching materials based on CA might be achieved by inclusion of the most common errors occurring outside the sphere predicted by CA alone.

(1969:29)

In the light of the “avoidance strategy” observed by Dušková and Schachter (1974), among others, James (1980:186) argued that:

If it is true that CAs can predict errors which fail to materialize it is equally true that EA can fail to recognize errors which have materialized.

In his defense of CA, James opined that:

...each approach has its vital role to play in accounting for L2 learning problems. They should be viewed as complementing each other rather than as competitors for some procedural pride of place. (1980:187)
Wilkins (1972) however suggested that:

Contrastive linguistics should be carried out to provide
d a linguistic explanation for known errors, rather than as
 d a predictive procedure. (1972:222)

CA was not only attacked on its empirical validity and predictive

value, it was also criticized for its theoretical and methodological
assumptions. In the 1960s, Chomsky notably challenged the general
learning theory based on behaviorism that was used to explain first
language acquisition; this criticism was also directed at second language
acquisition. The behaviourist notion of imitation and reinforcement
could not account for the creativity of language. The concept of
stimulus-response could not explain how a language learner could
understand and generate an infinite number of sentences that he has
never encountered before. The behaviourist view of learning considers
learning as an external phenomenon depending on habit-formation
formed through practice and reinforcement and the linguistic
environment. Chomsky's mentalist view sees language learning more as
an internal mental phenomenon, which is creative and universal. The
language learner possesses a set of mental processes that could be
triggered off by any linguistic input in the form of exposure in natural
settings or formal instruction. Chomsky called these active mental
processes Language Acquisition Device. This device is responsible for
the creativity of the human mind. It works on the linguistic input,
converting it into a form the language learner could store and later
produce. In other words, language is not merely shaped by external
forces. It is creatively constructed within the mind of the learner as he interacts with his environment. As such, habit-formation through practice and reinforcement cannot alone account for SLA. "If language learning could not be explained in terms of habit-formation, then clearly the central notion of interference was bound to be challenged" (Ellis, 1985:30) and the concept of L1 interference in SLA is one of the cornerstones of CA.

The CA Hypothesis was also criticized on its assumption that differences between L1 and L2 would cause difficulties and difficulties produce errors. Critics of CA argued that 'difference' is a linguistic concept while 'difficulty' is psychological and there is no reason to believe that the degree of linguistic difference between two languages should correlate with the level of learning difficulty and consequently with the occurrence of errors. Empirical studies have shown that there is no significant relationship between difficulty and error. (Ellis, 1985:31)

The linguistic basis of CA, which was mostly built upon translation equivalence as established by a bilingual informant, was also called into question. It was pointed out that there was no theoretical basis for 'translation equivalence'. In CA, a comparison of languages is carried out based on a description of the different categories that constitute the patterns of a language. However languages are realized differently from each other and this precludes a common categorization of their patterns. According to Bloomfield (1933):

The differences (among languages) are great enough to prevent our setting up any system of classification that would fit all languages.
If there are no universal categories i.e. categories that are common in all natural languages any comparison across languages cannot be constructed.

CA has also been criticized for failing to incorporate into its framework the variability of language use, that is, in which non-linguistic and linguistic contexts and situations, transfer errors are likely to occur.

It has also been questioned that if CA could not predict a majority of errors made by learners, of what practical worth was it to language teachers. As many of the predictions proved to be superficial, a second language teacher could just depend on his practical experience.

Changing attitudes towards errors were also responsible for the loss in favour for CA among linguists. CA was constructed within the behaviourist framework. According to behaviourist accounts of L2 learning, errors are signs of failure and are undesirable and thus should be avoided. It was believed that errors if allowed to be committed, would, by the very fact that they were committed, be reinforced. But soon, linguists, beginning with Pitt Corder (1967) began to view errors from a positive perspective. They see errors as evidence of ongoing hypothesis by the learner on the language that he is learning. Hence the importance of carrying out a CA to predict errors becomes less obvious. As a reaction to the shortcomings of contrastive analysis, error analysis was introduced as an alternative.
2.4 Error Analysis

Contrastive Analysis claimed to predict errors made in L2 learning but when empirical studies were carried out, linguists discovered that many kinds of errors that were not due to L1 interference could neither be predicted nor explained by CA. Consequently scholars began to give serious attention to EA. Prior to the late 1960s, EA was carried out on an ad hoc basis for pragmatic goals. It consisted of an impressionistic collection of common errors and their taxonomic classification into categories. There was no systematic attempt to account for their occurrence.

The renewed interest in EA emerged with the publication of Corder's article "The Significance of Learner's Errors" in 1967. From then on there was a series of articles by Corder (1971, 1973, 1974), Strevens (1970), Selinker (1969, 1972), Richards (1971, 1973) and others which helped to give it direction (Ellis, 1985:51) and opened up another area of research called Interlanguage (Sridhar, 1981) and EA emerged as a theory and a method for teaching and learning. Corder (1967) provided the reasons why errors are significant for the learner, the researcher and the teacher. He believes that the process of language acquisition is basically similar for both first and second language learning and the strategies used in both processes are also substantially the same. The errors made by a L2 learner are similar to the first approximations of a child learning his first language. They are both systematic and provide evidence of the system to which they belong.
Based on this viewpoint he proposed a change in our attitude towards errors.

Corder makes an important distinction between mistakes and errors. Mistakes are deviations due to performance factors such as random slips of the tongue, memory limitations, fatigue, emotional strain, etc. They are not systematic and are of no significance in language learning. Errors however are systematic, inevitable and constitute a necessary part of the language learning process. They allow the learner to form and test hypothesis about the nature of the new language that he is learning. Errors provide the researchers information on the progress of the learner in the learning process and evidence of how a second language is acquired (Corder, 1967). Corder, in his article entitled "The Significance of Lærner’s Errors", believes that a learner’s first language is facilitative. He proposed that errors should be seen as indications of the learner’s learning strategies:

...the learner’s possession of his native language is facilitative and that errors are not to be regarded as signs of inhibitions, but simply as evidence of his strategies of learning. (in Richards, 1974:27)

The procedure for EA as spelled out by Corder (1974) is as follows:

1. Selection of a corpus of language. The size, medium, homogeneity with regards to age, L1 background, stage of development of the sample is decided.

2. Identification of errors. Mistakes or lapses (deviant sentences that are due to processing limitations) must be distinguished from errors
(deviant sentences that result from lack of competence).

3. Classification of errors.

4. Explanation of the causes of errors.

5. Evaluation of errors.

Errors are systematic and consistent deviations from the norms of the target language and they are typical of the learner’s linguistic system at a particular point of learning. In pointing out the similarities between first and second language acquisition, Corder asserted that:

... the key concept in both cases is that the learner is using a definite system of language at every point in his development although it is not the adult system in the one case (first language), nor that of the second language on the other. The learner’s errors are evidence of this system and are themselves systematic.  
(in Richards, 1974:24)

Corder said that “...the concept of ungrammaticality of deviance is not applicable to the learner. Everything he utters is by definition a grammatical utterance in his dialect.” (in Corder, 1981:32). He proposed to call this intermediate system constructed by the learner in the process of learning a language “transitional competence” or “transitional dialect”. He also alternatively called it “idiosyncratic dialect”.

Other linguists defined this transitional grammar as “an interim grammar” (Cook, 1969), “an interlanguage” (Selinker, 1969) and “an approximative system” (Nemser, 1971).

Dulay and Burt (in Richards, 1974:115) in presenting their hypothesis that L2 acquisition = L1 acquisition categorize “goofs” or errors into:

1. Interference-like goofs - those reflecting native language structure
2. L1 Developmental goofs - those not reflecting native language structure but are found in L1 acquisition of TL e.g. over-generalization

3. Ambiguous goofs - these can be classified as interference or developmental goofs

4. Unique goofs - these do not reflect L1 structure and are not found in L1 acquisition data of the target language.

Richards and Sampson (in Richards, 1974:5-15) in their discussion of the learners' approximative systems put forward seven factors that influence and characterize these systems namely:

1. Language transfer which produces interlingual errors

2. Intralingual interference

3. Sociolinguistic situation

4. Modality of exposure to the target language and the modality of production

5. Age

6. Instability of approximative systems

7. Universal hierarchy of difficulty

Intralingual factors concern the faulty knowledge of the target language. Richards (1974:174) attributed intralingual and developmental errors to:

1. Over-generalisation based on the learner's experience of other structures in the target language.

2. Ignorance of rule restrictions. Errors are due to analogy and rote learning of the rules.
3. Incomplete application of rules

4. False concepts hypothesized

Richards concluded that interference from the mother tongue is clearly a major source of difficulty in second language learning, and CA has proved valuable in locating areas of interlanguage interference. Many errors, however, derive from the strategies employed by the learner in language acquisition, and from the mutual interference of items within the TL. These cannot be accounted for by CA. Teaching techniques and procedures should take account of the structural and developmental conflicts that come about in language learning.

Selinker attributed errors to:

1. Negative transfer from the mother tongue
2. Transfer of training
3. Strategies of learning
4. Strategies of communication
5. Overgeneralization of TL linguistic material

2.5 Interlanguage

Revised thinking about the process of learning claimed that we acquire a second language in a fixed order as a result of our innate propensity to process language data in specific ways. This theory about the centrality of learner-internal processes and a fixed order in which language acquisition takes place was first developed to explain L1 acquisition and researchers of L2 learning later adopted it. The key concept in this mentalist view of language acquisition in L2 learning is
interlanguage, a term that is used to refer to the successive linguistic systems that a learner constructs as he tries to achieve mastery of the target language. These systems are distinct from the source language and the target language. Selinker (1969) used this term while other researchers such as Corder (1967), Cook (1969), Nemser (1971) and others referred to this phenomenon differently.

Interlanguage refers both to the structured system constructed by the learner at any given stage of his development and the whole series of these interlocking systems i.e. the interlanguage continuum. The assumptions underlying the interlanguage theory is stated by Nemser (in Richards, 1974: 56) namely:

a) at any given time the learner's language is distinct from the source language and the target language and it is internally structured.

b) the learner's approximative systems form an evolving series

c) in a given contact situation the approximative system of learners at the same stage of proficiency roughly coincides. Any major differences can be ascribed to differences in the learning experience.

Selinker (1974), Corder (1967) and Richards (1971, 1974) put forth similar views. Selinker noted that any description of interlanguage should take into consideration the phenomenon of fossilization. The acquisition of a L2 for most learners is the reorganization of the linguistic material of an interlanguage to identify it with a particular target language. This interlanguage could fossilize, that is, it could become a permanent competence of the learner. Selinker (in Richards, 1974:36) defines fossilization as a mechanism whereby the linguistic
items, rules and subsystems of a particular native language are retained in the interlanguage of a learner relative to a particular target language no matter what his age is or the amount of instruction he gets. It is a situation where the learner fails to reach target language competence. Selinker explains this phenomenon by postulating the existence of a genetically determined latent psychological structure, which is activated when the learner attempts to express meanings which he may have in the target language. This latent psychological structure is responsible for five principal processes operating in interlanguage and these are:

1. Language transfer i.e. transfer of L1 elements into L2
2. Transfer of training i.e. influence of teaching methods.
3. Strategies of L2 learning. Fossilizable items are "a result of an identifiable approach by the learner to the material to be learned."
4. Strategies of L2 communication. Fossilized errors are due to the learner's need to use the TL at a level beyond his competence.
5. Overgeneralization of TL linguistic material.

Selinker (in Richards, 1974:41) also gives some minor processes such as hypercorrection, spelling pronunciation, cognate pronunciation, holophone learning, etc.

The interlanguage theory both depended and generated empirical studies. Some of these studies were in the form of Error Analyses.
2.6 Studies in Error Analysis

Many studies have been conducted in EA abroad and locally. Foreign researchers include Buteau (1970), Richards (1971), Stenson (1971), Wyatt (1972), Jain (1974), Taylor (1975) and many others.

In 1970, Buteau (in Schumann and Stenson, 1974:22-31) conducted a pilot study on students’ errors and the learning of French as a second language in Canada. Her respondents consisted of one hundred and twenty-four students of intermediate level and all were English-speaking. However twenty-four of them were also French-speaking, while some also spoke other European languages such as Italian, Polish, Hungarian, etc. Seventy-nine of the total number also studied Latin. The grammar test that formed the corpus for the study consisted of two parts, the first consisting of forty-nine multiple-choice items while the second was a free-expression exercise requiring the use of verbal forms in the past, present and future. Her data showed that the study of Latin did not significantly correspond with the achievement in the French grammar. The general findings of her analysis indicated that mother tongue interference was insufficient to explain the difficulties in foreign language learning. She demonstrated that French sentences, which are structurally similar to English, are not necessarily the easiest to learn. She asserted that the probability of errors could not be gauged only from the degree of divergence of the two linguistic structures. As such, other factors of difficulty such as incorrect generalizations, number of possible alternatives involved in the choice of a particular structure, awareness of contextual cues, the frequency of usage in oral and written
communication, the relative teaching emphasis given to each item must be also be considered.

Richards (1970) studied the English errors produced by speakers of Japanese, Chinese, Burmese, French, Czech, Polish, Tagalog, Maori, Maltese, Indian and West African languages. An in-depth analysis of the errors frequently made by these students of English as a second language led him to summarize that the sources of intralingual and developmental errors are due to: i) overgeneralization, ii) ignorance of rule restrictions iii) incomplete application of rules and iv) false concepts hypothesized. He did not rule out the fact that L1 interference is another major source of difficulty but from his French-English data he gave an example of an English error a French speaker made which goes against positive transfer: *composed with (instead of composed of). He said, "Had the French speaker followed the grammar of his mother tongue, he would have produced the correct English form!"(in Schumann & Stenson, 1974:39) This error could not be explained within the CA framework. Richards also stated that errors could be teacher-induced. These are errors resulting from teaching techniques or course design. This category of errors was discussed by Stenson (1971). Stenson’s data was drawn from an observation of adult English classes at intermediate or advanced level in Tunisia. She did not make any attempt to provide any solution to induced errors but maintained that in structuring lessons, the teacher should monitor drills and explanations to ascertain that false generalizations are not made.
Jain (1974), studying the written work of university students who were Hindi speakers with seven to eleven years of instruction in English as a second language, concluded that as the proficiency of L2 learners improves there would be a decline in hypothesis testing and an increase in overgeneralization as a learning strategy. This finding is supported by Taylor (1975) who examined the overgeneralization and transfer errors in the writing of elementary and intermediate students in ESL class. His study indicated that transfer errors are more common with beginners than with intermediate students who made more overgeneralization errors. This is because the former have less experience of L2 to hypothesize the rules. They therefore make more use of their L1 knowledge. However, both language transfer and intralingual errors such as overgeneralization are not distinct processes as they both involve the notion of transfer of training i.e. previous learning influencing later learning.

Ho Wah Kam (1973), investigating the errors produced by Chinese students studying English as an L2 discovered that their errors were principally verbal. This finding is supported by Tsan Sui Huang’s study, which also included the use of nouns as another difficulty. However, Lam Shun Ling (1981), in her study on the composition of her subjects discovered that the major problem of Chinese learners of English is in the use of articles.

Studies in EA also abound in Malaysia, many of which look at English errors committed by Malaysian students whose mother tongue is Malay, Chinese or Tamil. There are also EA studies done on Malay
errors produced by Malaysian students whose first language is Chinese. In the field of foreign languages, many of the studies were done on errors produced by Malay students learning Arabic. There was also a study done on errors in French (Choi, 1986), German (Schmitz, 1991) and Spanish (Alicio, 1996) respectively. The above three doctoral studies were carried out to complement the contrastive studies done on Malay learners of these respective languages.

Yap Soon Hock (1974), Fatimah Dinna bt. Dr. Mohd. Din (1986), Angela Lee (1986), Padmanabhan Nair (1990), Fatimah Adelina Sastra Widjaja (1989) and Lim Miin Hwa (1999) are among some who have done studies on errors in English. Many of these studies revealed that the verb phrase has the highest frequency of errors.

Nair (1990) examined the errors in English of 120 students whose L1 is Malay. He discovered that the main difficulty of these learners was in the tenses. Errors in the use of the simple past, simple present, the future, the perfect and the continuous came up to about 75.36% of the total errors produced. He observed that the students could not meaningfully operate the concept of tenses. They generally fall back on the stem form of the verbs used. This is due to the differences in the nature of the verbal systems of the two languages. While English is tense-rulled using tense inflections to indicate time and aspect, Malay is affix-rulled. The concept of time in Malay is aspectual and adverbs are used to indicate time. Besides this, certain words are used to indicate the time frame. Context is also an indicator of time. This difference in the concept of time is a major contributor to the difficulties of the Malay
students in using the English verbs, which have an in-built function of tense-time-aspect matrix.

Lim Miin Hwa of Universiti Malaysia Sabah stated that the perfect tenses form a particular area of difficulty in the acquisition of the English grammar. In his research on the acquisition of the present perfect tense by Malay learners, he sought to find out to what extent interlingual differences may be the source of errors for these learners. Using the elicitation procedures posited by Corder, Lim analyzed and explained the percentages of errors made in the use of the present perfect tense by identifying the differences between L1 and L2 and discussing the subjects’ tendency to use certain verb forms in various situations and also the rules governing the use of the present perfect tense in English. The findings indicated that a large number of the errors in the use of the present perfect tense could be ascribed to crosslinguistic interference. As Malay verbs do not have tense distinction, each Malay verb phrase can have different equivalents in English. The errors produced could be due to the differences between Malay and English in terms of temporal references of verbs. Lim however claimed that on the whole, the results still indicated that interlingual interference appeared less significant than intralingual interference in the acquisition of the present perfect tense. He observed that the learners were insensitive to the use of certain temporal adverbials e.g. “since 4 o’clock”, that required the present perfect tense. This intralingual difficulty could be caused by the fact that certain temporal adverbials can also be used with the past simple and the
present perfect continuous tenses. A large number of the students were ignorant of the rules governing the use of the present perfect. He attributed this lack of awareness to their confusion with the four perfect tenses. One of his recommendations to facilitate the acquisition of the present perfect tense is the use of comparisons and contrasts of the rules governing the use of this tense.

The above studies revealed that the verbs seem to be an area of major difficulty for Malay learners of English. The non-existence of a tense system in Malay and the difference in the perception of time between Malay and English do not facilitate the acquisition of the English tenses. Such difficulty can also be expected of Malay learners when they learn French, which has a more complex system than English. The past tenses, especially the passé composé and the imparfait, have been perceived as particularly problematic for English-speaking learners of French (Kaplan, 1987). These two tenses are employed in everyday spoken language and learners of French need to distinguish their aspectual differences when using them. Understanding the use of past tenses, in particular the distinction between the passé composé and the passé simple on the one hand, and the imparfait on the other, is always a difficulty for English-speaking learners of French. For the main part this is due to the fact that the aspectual functions performed by the various past tense forms do not overlap in the two languages (Andrews, 1992). A study by Choi (1986) has shown that generally the verbal system is a problem area for Malay learners. Thus we can expect the two past tenses under study to be more problematic for these students.
2.7 Studies in Contrastive Analysis between Malay and French

As the learning of French in Malaysia has not been widespread until recent years, there has not been much research carried out on the problems of the teaching and the learning of French in Malaysia. Zainab (1982) did a contrastive study of the Malay and French phonological systems with the aim to identify the pronunciation problems of Malay learners of French at elementary level. Her study was carried out according to the procedures laid out by Lado in Linguistics Across Cultures (1957).

Choi (1987) in her doctoral thesis "Essai de recherche en analyse contrastive et en analyse d'erreurs: Les systèmes morphologiques du français et du malais." carried out a study on the morphological systems of Malay and French with the objective of determining the problems that Malay students encounter when learning French. She used two procedures i.e. CA and EA as she believed that these two methods complement each other and should be used together in the elaboration of a method for teaching French. Her brief description of the French morphological processes, using André Martinet's work (1979) as the main reference, is followed by a parallel comparison of the different aspects and elements of the two morphological systems such as the syntax, the nominal system, adjectival system, verbal system, etc. To facilitate the comparison of the verbal system of the two languages, the main features of the French system were described. French verbs are marked for person, number, gender, tense and mood. On the other hand,
Malay verbs can only express aspect and mood and they use an affixation system that can change lexical items into verbs of differing functions or into other word classes. The inflection of French verbs is discussed in terms of conjugation while the change in Malay lexical items is one of affixation. In French, there are generally four classes of verbal modality i.e. tense, mood, aspect and voice. The French tense is a fusion of time, person and aspect. The verbs take different endings and sometimes have different radicals. There are simple and compound tenses. In Malay, temporal words such as the adverbs are used to indicate time and aspectual auxiliaries are used to indicate temporal relativity.

Using the similarities and differences of the two linguistic systems as a guideline, the main possible areas of the French morphology that would present problems to Malay students learning French were identified and predicted. The problem areas would be:

1. the agreement in number and gender
2. the verbal system (choice of tense and verbal agreement)
3. the prepositions
4. the incorrect choice of grammatical elements

The use of the French verbs would constitute a problem to a Malay student because of the differences between French and Malay. The French system is more complex. Malay does not take any verbal inflection. Besides the main verbs, it has just the aspectual and the modal verbs. French has a range of tenses to talk about the past, the present and the future and also the different temporal relativity. It has
tenses that can relate the future in the past and the past in the future. As such the Malay learner has to learn the different ways of conjugating the French verbs according to tense, person and the different modalities. He must also learn the tense agreement, which is not an easy task.

To overcome the above-mentioned problems, Choi recommended that there should be morphological automatisms through structural exercises. The learners should also be made aware of how these automatisms operate through the comparison of the indicators and features found in the two languages.

To complement the above contrastive study, an EA was also conducted. The instrument used was a test consisting of one hundred items and each item is in the form of one or two sentences with blanks requiring a word or several words of different classes. The blanks could be in any position and the sentences are of different length and complexity. The sentences were constructed in such a manner where there is contextual constraint in the answers to be given. The constraints could be morphologic, syntactic, contrastive, synonymic or causal.

The subjects consisted of 37 Malay students of the Mara Institute of Technology who were going to France to pursue scientific studies in French universities. These students, comprising of 9 girls and 28 boys aged between 17 and 18 years, had already gone through about 350 hours of French within a period of four and a half months.

The answers were graded on the following scale of acceptability:
1. acceptable
2. acceptable conditionally
3. grammatically or semantically unacceptable

4. totally unacceptable

For this study Choi employed only the categories of grammatical errors, some of which are: agreement in gender, agreement in number, agreement in person, choice of tense, choice of voice, tense agreement, confusion in the use of prepositions, incorrect choice of grammatical elements, omission of obligatory terms syntactically, etc. Under these various typologies that came to about twenty, she illustrated some of the errors committed by the respondents. At the end of each typology of errors, there was a discussion on the source of these errors. In the analysis, it was discovered that the principal errors produced by the learners are in the following areas:

1. agreement in number and gender
2. choice of tense
3. tense agreement
4. wrong class of words used.

The findings of this study correspond more or less to the findings revealed in the CA done a priori. With the knowledge of what constitutes the difficulties and problems Malay students would face vis-à-vis the learning of French, it was suggested that the teacher of French in Malaysia adopt an eclectic method, integrating all the best techniques and methods, classic or non-conventional.

Roshidah also conducted another contrastive study between French and Malay in 1997. This study used the structural model to describe and compare the Malay and French personal pronouns in socio-linguistic and
grammatical contexts respectively. The description and parallel comparison of the pronouns in a socio-linguistic context were carried out by examining what factors decide the use of a certain form of pronoun in each of the two linguistic communities, for example in Malay, the use of a certain pronoun depends on the situation, the interlocutor and the subject of conversation. The same procedure was carried out to describe and compare the use of the pronouns in the grammatical context.

The studies summarized above are some of the many that have been done on the acquisition of a second or foreign language by foreigners and Malaysians. Some of them, such as Choi, have identified the verbal system as an area of particular difficulty in the learning of the grammar of some languages, for example, French. These studies have been carried out for pedagogical purposes i.e. to help teachers of the languages concerned identify the problem areas a priori or a posteriori and also to those who intend to design materials for the teaching of the respective languages.