CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

There is evidence that the linguistic habits the student has acquired from his first language interfere with the establishing of new habits necessary for the learning of the foreign language. According to Newmark, "it is at this level of instruction that the task of learning the new language becomes the task of fighting off the old set of structures in order to clear the way for the new set." (Newmark, 1966: 79)

To demonstrate examples of how deep-rooted patterns of an Iranian student may expose him to mother tongue interference in his EFL environment, let us consider the following instances. There are seven English words: 'thanks', 'think', 'then', 'went', 'those', 'ship', and 'full' in the following sentences and sentence fragments, in which seven English sounds were repeatedly replaced with other sounds by my students:

1. Thanks … *[tæŋks]

2. I think … *[siŋk]

3 … and then? *[den]

4. Yes, they went. *[vent]

5. What about those? *[dɔz]

6. Look at the ship. *[ʃi:p]

7. No, I am full. *[fu:l]

It is clear from the above examples that Persian speakers change the meaning of the words by replacing certain sounds which do not exist in Persian with other sounds.

A native speaker of Persian assuming his mother language to have correspondences with English, may unwittingly produce the above words such as 'tanks', 'sink', 'den', 'vent', 'doze', 'ship' and 'full' without being aware of the fact that they have transferred their mother tongue speech sounds into the target language.

Another problem is that Persian speakers apply the stress pattern of their mother tongue to English Words. Words such as 'dictionary', 'carpet', 'paper', and 'question', which are nouns with the stress on their first syllables, are produced by Persian speakers with the stress on the last syllable.

There are other similar examples but, the instances indicated above are sufficient to illustrate how the limited exposure of Persian students to English is one of the reasons that brings about the interference of the deep-rooted patterns of their mother tongue.

In light of the above, there appears to be a pressing need for a contrastive study of the sound systems, the stress pattern, and the syllable structure of English and Persian as well as an analysis of the errors committed by students in the learning of the pronunciation of English words.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study has two main objectives: general and applied. The general aim of this study is to describe the phonetic and phonological systems of English and Persian in order to find out the similarities and the differences. The applied aim is to look at the pedagogical implications of the contrastive/error analysis. While the former is a contribution to general linguistics, the latter is pedagogical in nature, looking at the possible difficulties Iranian students of English as a foreign language might face and the ways in which the difficulties can be overcome.

The contrastive study describes and contrasts the phonetic and phonological systems as well as syllabic structure and stress patterns in Persian and English. It explores the linguistic similarities and differences and predicts the possibility that the differences may have pedagogical value for the teaching or learning of English as a foreign language in Iran. The Error Analysis is used as a supplementary tool to show whether the errors predicted by the Contrastive Analysis are actually observed in the learners' interlanguage, and the extent of L1 interference. Finally, some pedagogical recommendations are presented to help teachers overcome the linguistic pitfalls and correct the errors.

The current study has three applications: First, it can be used in courses in applied linguistics for postgraduate students who need to learn methods used in contrastive analysis. Second, since classroom pedagogy is the immediate concern of this research, findings may be utilized by teachers, course designers and curriculum developers in EFL courses, and third it provides guidelines for theorists on how contrastive studies can bridge the gap between theory and practice in applied linguistics.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Mastery of the pronunciation of any language needs active training. When learning a foreign language, learners tend to transfer the native language structures in the process. In the case of the learning of the foreign sound system, they tend to transfer to the target language sounds from their mother tongue and replace them for the sounds that do not exist in their mother language.

"Much less known and often not even suspected … [is] that the speaker of one language listening to another does not actually hear the foreign language sound units _ phonemes. He hears his own. Phonemic differences in the foreign language will be consistently missed by him if there is no similar phonemic difference in his native language."(Lado, 1957: 11)

That causes the ridiculous situation of an EFL classroom, where the teacher utters a sentence with English pronunciation but the students repeat after him/her with their own pronunciation influenced by the native language. The teacher repeats again to correct them but the students find the repetitions redundant and boring. They do not even understand the reason for those repetitions.

We now see more clearly the need to compare the native and English sound systems and to analyze the errors as a means of predicting and explaining the pronunciation problems of Persian learners of English.

1.4 Methodology

For the purpose of eliciting of errors, we have selected the CA/EA approach as practiced by many contrastivists. In this approach, the results of the CA are compared with the results of the EA to determine whether they tally. If the findings of the EA tally with the predictions made in the CA, then it can be said that the Contrastive Hypothesis is correct. In this section a brief history of the two methods will be given, followed by an examination of each method.

1.4.1 Contrastive Analysis

Contrastive Analysis (CA) developed in the middle of the twentieth century as a branch of applied linguistics. Comparisons were made between two languages with the aim of finding out similarities and differences in the two systems. Initially, CA was seen as a tool for language teachers to use in helping students avoid common problems due to the interference of mother tongue. It was believed that via a comparison of the learner's language and the target language particular difficulties could be identified through instruction based on the difficulties, thus avoiding errors. Charles C. Fries described the applicability of CA to language teaching:

> "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." (Fries, 1945: 9).

Further applications of CA were incorporated by Robert Lado whose work *Linguistics Across Cultures* provided contrasts of numerous languages with English. In the Preface Lado states:

> "The plan of the book rests on the assumption 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" (Lado, 1957: vii).

Contrastive Analysis entered into a new phase with the Chomskyan revolution in linguistics. According to Croft (1980: 93):

> "The Chomskyan revolution gave a fresh impetuous to CA, not only making it possible for the comparisons to be more explicit and precise, but also giving it what seemed to be a more theoretical foundation by claiming the existence of language universals".

Along with this new movement, the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) got stronger, and gained widespread attention. Scholars considered two versions for Contrastive Analysis. The CA that emerged from considerations of language universals is often referred to as the strong version of CA because it assumes that it can *predict* difficulties that a learner will encounter. Wardhaugh (1970: 126) describes the strong version of CA as follows:

> "It is possible to contrast the system of one language _ the grammar, phonology, and lexicon _ with the system of a second language in order to *predict* those

> difficulties which a speaker of [one] language will have in learning the [other] language and to construct teaching materials to help him learn that language."

The central idea of the strong version of the CA was its ability to *predict* difficulties. And, another important consideration of the CA was that the contrastive analyses were performed by linguists in a straightforward, empirical manner. Additionally, the linguists performing these analyses were often removed from speakers of the languages in question, and sometimes only worked with the particular grammars of the given languages. Thus, what contributed to CA were merely notable differences in the language systems that the linguists described and predicted as problematic areas for the learners. Difficulties and questions about the efficacy and validity of CA ensued when what was predicted as problematic areas did not develop as such for some, and sometimes many learners. There appeared to be a strong disconnection between what CA predicted and what actually occurred in the language classroom. Because of this disconnection, a weak version of CA emerged that sought to explain the source of observed difficulties rather than predict them. Wardhaugh provides an explanation of the weak version of CA:

> "The weak version requires of the linguist only that he use the best linguistic knowledge available to him in order to account for observed difficulties in second language learning. It does not require what the strong version requires, the prediction of those difficulties and, conversely, of those learning points which do not create any difficulties at all. The weak version leads to an approach which makes fewer demands of contrastive theory than does the strong version. It starts with the evidence provided by linguistic interference and uses such evidence to explain the similarities and differences between systems" (Wardhaugh, 1970: 127).

The prediction in the strong version of CA gave way to explanation in the weak version. In the background to both CA, and CAH, were concurrent developments in psychology that also influenced CA's development. Behaviorism, as Brown (2000: 208) notes, "contributed to the notion that human behavior is the sum of its smallest parts and components, and therefore that language learning could be described as the acquisition of all those discrete units." The discrete units of language under study in CA, particularly those that differed from one language to another, became all important as objects of study in keeping with the behavioristic approach. Learning theory, and particularly the theory of *transfer*, also influenced CA and its development. According to Sridhar:

> ". . . *transfer* refers to the hypothesis that the learning of a task is either facilitated ("positive" transfer) or impeded ("negative" transfer) by the previous learning of another task, depending on, among other things, the degree of similarity or difference obtained between the two tasks" (Sridhar, in Croft, 1983: 94).

Where transfer is hindered, it is hindered by interference of the previous learning. In the case of language learning, the mother tongue (L1) often interferes with L2 learning; and that is what the CAH was expected to either predict or explain.

There are obvious uses for CA in foreign language teaching, and it appears that the weak version of the CA may be more practically useful than the strong version. CA is useful when one is teaching a group of students with a common language background. Textbooks and teaching materials, subject matter highlights, kinds of practice drills, and other course concerns may all be developed with the CA particularities of a certain group in mind. As

Sheen found for example, ". . . in an ESL course for speakers of Arabic, overt attention to targeted syntactic contrasts between Arabic and English reduced error rates" (Sheen, in Brown, 2000: 213). In the case of involving the weak version of the CA, teachers can better identify the source of common, recurring errors committed by their students.

There are, of course, limitations to both CA and CAH. There are limits to the number of contrasts that a teacher can keep in mind. However, this generally applies to new teachers rather than more experienced teachers. Though in considering the new teacher, it may be better for them, overall, to learn of the differences between their learners' languages and the taught language. This involves learning the students' native language if the teacher does not belong to the same ethnic background.

The weak version of CA, in explaining error source rather than predicting difficulties, is more useful in these conditions simply because some predictions of difficulties often do not materialize as predicted. In spite of a certain limitations in applied practice due to multiple origins of students in many language learning classes, both CA and CAH are relevant because of the following reasons. The Foreign Institute of the U.S. State Department provides intensive language classes in many foreign languages for its workers (English speaking workers); and, there is a certain, consistent, high level of competency expected to be achieved in each course. According to Oldin, "…students who spend twenty-four weeks studying Swedish are expected to be as proficient as students who spend forty-four weeks studying Finnish" (Oldin, 1989: 40). Other examples range from 20 weeks for Spanish, Italian, and French, to 24 weeks for Swahili, and Rumanian, to 44 weeks for Bengali, Burmese, Japanese, and Turkish. Of the 37 taught languages, 23 take 44 weeks, 2 take 32 weeks, 8 take 24 weeks, and 4 take 20 weeks). Obviously, there are stronger contrasts between English and the 44-week languages than there are for the 20-week

languages. These contrasts are addressed in CA, explained in CAH, and seen in the different time requirements for the courses.

1.4.2 Error Analysis

In many ways, Error Analysis (EA) preceded Contrastive Analysis (CA). However, it was due to some of the weaknesses discussed earlier that led to a rise in the study of EA and its further development from its traditional roots. Initially, EA developed as a pragmatic, applied method of interpreting and classifying student errors in language learning, and "[it] was conceived and performed for its "feedback" value in designing pedagogical materials and strategies." (Croft, 1980: 103) As an overall pedagogical method, it did not differ much at the time from the same practical types of activities that occurred in other subject matters where experienced classroom teachers used student errors to guide their teaching. In the mid-1950's, Lee began to advocate "both a systematic and global collection of errors…from different student populations, arguing that the more teachers know about the problems their learners face the more effectively they can guide them over the rough spots" (Lee, in Robinett and schachter 1983: 145). His work helped to move traditional EA beyond mere collecting and categorizing of errors, into a formally rigorous and pedagogical system wherein "error" was defined, and the system could "account for the occurrence of errors either in linguistic or psychological terms" (Croft, 1980: 102). In such a system, and with a focus on actual errors versus predicting areas of difficulty, EA significantly departed from CA. Weaknesses in CA, particularly its *a priori*, or predictive version, were better answered by the errors as revealed in EA; then, the *a posteri*ori, or explanatory version of CA had more practical value and served as a basis for possible interference sources of errors.

The methodology of EA proceeded much the same as the theory itself did from a somewhat traditional to a more sophisticated analysis as the field grew. According to Croft (1980: 103), traditional EA methodology consists of the following steps:

1. collection of data (from compositions, examinations, etc.);
2. identification of errors (labeling with various degrees of precision depending on the task, with respect to the exact nature of the deviation, e.g. dangling preposition, anomalous sequence of tenses, etc.);
3. classification into error types (e.g. errors of agreement, articles, verb forms, etc.);
4. statement of relative frequency of error types;
5. identification of the areas of difficulty in the target language; and,
6. therapy (remedial drills, lessons, etc.)

As EA expanded, more sophisticated investigations were added to the methodology, to include:

1. analysis of the source of errors (e.g. mother tongue interference, overgeneralization, inconsistencies in the spelling system of the TL, etc.);
2. determination of the degree of disturbance caused by the error (or the seriousness of the error in terms of communication, norm, etc.)

   (Croft, 1980: 103).

A brief mentioning is needed here on the notion of "error" and that of "error" versus "mistake". First, there is an inevitability to err in learning a target language. Just as a child's performance in acquiring a first language often consists of errors, so too will a second-language learner's performance often consist of errors, because their understanding

of the system is incomplete. Secondly, there are two important distinctions made between "errors" versus "mistake". The first, is by Corder:

> Mistakes are deviations due to performance factors such as memory limitations, spelling pronunciations, fatigue, emotional strain, etc. Errors, on the other hand, are systematic, consistent deviances characteristic of the learner's linguistic system at a given stage of learning (Corder, in Croft, 1980: 105).

And the second is from James: "an error cannot be self-corrected, while a mistake can be self-corrected if the deviation is pointed out to the speaker (James, in Brown, 2000: 217). Corder views errors as being systematic, James views errors as not being self-correctable. Thus, error treatment is generally called for.

"Once it is established that error treatment is called for, an important model of learning to consider is Skinner's operant conditioning model; and his view of undesirable response (error) extinction. Skinner found that reinforcers, whether positive or negative (i.e. positive: good grades on a test; negative: to avoid bad grades on a test), strengthen behavior." (Slavin, 1994: 165) In the case of undesirable behaviors, "the best method of extinction of such behaviors is the removal or absence of any reinforcement (positive or negative); however, the active reinforcement of alternative responses hastens that extinction. In the case of error treatment, the simple removal of reinforcers does not eliminate the error. What is needed in error treatment is an alternative response, a therapy in a manner of speaking that acts to repair, or add to learning or conditioning in an alternative way." (Brown, 2000: 82)

EA has a certain "feedback" value both in securing and designing pedagogical materials and strategies. By addressing areas of difficulty for the learner in a systematic way, EA can aid in determining the sequence of presentations in the classroom and from textbooks. Based on the results of EA, textbook presentation sequences may be modified to introduce relatively easier structures before more difficult ones. Additionally, EA helps to decide the relative degrees or emphasis required in addressing particular items in the language. Furthermore, EA has a strong role in devising remedial lessons and exercises that attempt to mediate student's errors. And lastly, EA plays a significant role in selecting items for testing learner's proficiency.

There are a variety of criticisms leveled against EA. The main criticisms appear to come in two kinds: first, that there is a danger in paying too much attention to learners' errors; and secondly, that there are shortcomings in EA as concerns where the data is collected from, as well as identifying the sources of errors. In response to the first kind, if errors are viewed as that which inhibit and/or prevent communication, then it is difficult to say that too much attention may be placed on such errors. On the other hand, if communication is not being prevented or hindered by what are perceived or classified as errors, then there is little need to address the produced "error;" and, there may be more of a need to contextually reconsider the classification of the error. The second criticism may be the result of placing too much faith in EA, or in the early statements of its advocates as a key to understanding second language acquisition. Such an example is found in the following statement by Corder:

> "A learner's errors . . . are significant in [that] they provide to the researcher evidence of how languages are learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures

the learner is employing in the discovery of the language" (Corder, in Brown, 2000: 217).

Such a view of errors parallels the problem with the strong and weak versions of CA: not all learners make the same errors. EA is not predictive; and while EA can be explanatory, it is only so *after* the error has been committed and possible reasons have been examined.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study is limited to the level of phonetics and phonology. Thus it focuses on the comparison of English and Persian phonetics, phonology, syllabic structure and stress patterns. For this purpose, the Persian and English sounds, diphthongs, triphthongs, syllabic structures, and the stress patterns in four word classes, namely nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs are described in detail. Furthermore, all the sounds, vowels, diphthongs, and triphthongs as well as syllabic structures and stress patterns at two specific levels, that is, primary and secondary are compared to bring out the differences in the two languages. This study also addresses the problems faced by Persian learners in the perception and production of English sounds.

1.6 The English Language

English is a West Germanic language which developed in England, and is the first language for most people in Australia, Canada, the Commonwealth Caribbean, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It is used extensively as a second language or as an official language in many countries throughout the world, especially in

commonwealth countries such as India, Pakistan and South Africa. It is also an official language used in many international organizations.

Modern English is sometimes described as the world's lingua franca. English is the dominant international language in communications, science, business, aviation, entertainment and diplomacy. The influence of the British Empire is the primary reason for the initial spread of the language far beyond the British Isles. Following World War II, the growing economic and cultural influence of the United States has significantly accelerated the spread of the language.

1.6.1 Geographical Distribution of the English Language

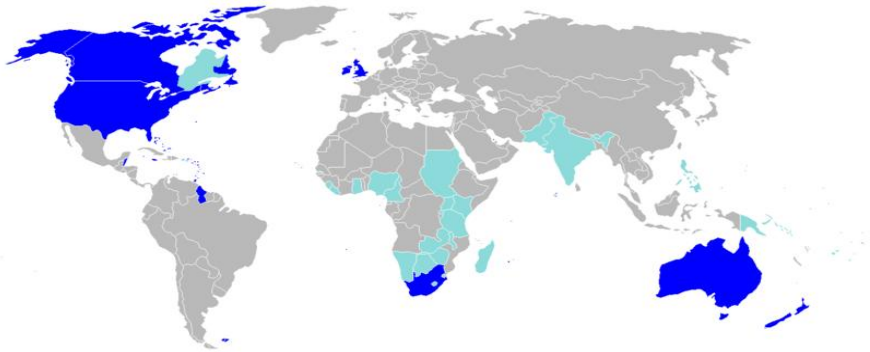
Approximately 375 million people speak English as their first language. English today is probably the third largest language by number of native speakers after Mandarin Chinese and Spanish. (Curtis, 2006: 192) All estimates have it trailing Mandarin Chinese, and other estimates are mixed as to whether it outranks Hindi, Spanish, and Arabic. However, when combining native and non-native speakers it is probably the most commonly spoken language in the world, though possibly second to a combination of Chinese languages. (Mokri, 2006: 116) Estimates that include second language speakers vary greatly from 470 million to over a billion depending on how literacy or mastery is defined. (Tavangar, 2003: 58) There are some who claim that non-native speakers now outnumber native speakers by ratio of 3 to 1. (Samen, 2004: 71).

The countries with the highest populations of native English speakers are, in descending order: United States (215 million), United Kingdom (61 million), Canada (18.2 million), Australia (15.5 million), Ireland (3.8 million), South Africa (3.7 million), and New Zealand (3.0-3.7 million). Countries such as Jamaica and Nigeria also have millions of

native speakers of dialect continuums ranging from an English-based Creole to a more standard version of English. Of those nations where English is spoken as a second language, India has the most speakers (Indian English). David Crystal claims that, combining native and non-native speakers, India now has more people who speak or understand English than any other country in the world. (Tavangar, 2003: 63)

"English is the primary language in Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia (Australian English), the Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, Belize, the British Indian Ocean Territory, the British Virgin Islands, Canada (Canadian English), the Cayman Islands, Dominica, the Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Grenada, Guernsey (Guernsey English), Guyana, Ireland (Hiberno-English), Isle of Man (Manx English), Jamaica (Jamaican English), Jersey, Montserrat, Nauru, New Zealand (New Zealand English), Pitcairn Islands, Saint Helena, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Singapore, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, the Turks and Caicos Islands, the United Kingdom, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the United States." (Tavangar, 2003: 67).

In many other countries, where English is not the most spoken language, it is an official language; "these countries include Botswana, Cameroon, Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia Ghana, Gambia, Hong Kong, India, Kiribati, Lesotho, Liberia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malta, the Marshall Islands, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Rwanda, the Solomon Islands, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. It is also one of the 11 official languages that are given equal status in South Africa ("South African English"). English is also an important language in several former colonies or current dependent territories of the United Kingdom and the United States, such as in Hong Kong and Mauritius." (Tavangar, 2003: 76)



World countries, states, and provinces where English is a primary language are in dark blue; countries, states and provinces where it is an official but not a primary language are in light blue. (Tavangar, 2003: 35)

1.6.2 English as a Global Language

Because English is so widely spoken, it has often been referred to as a 'world language', the *lingua franca* of the modern era. While English is not an official language in many countries, it is currently the language most often taught as a second language around the world. "Some linguists believe that it is no longer the exclusive cultural sign of 'native English speakers', but rather a language that is absorbing aspects of cultures worldwide as it continues to grow. It is, by international treaty, the official language for aerial and maritime communications, as well as one of the official languages of the European Union, the United Nations, and most international athletic organizations, including the International Olympic Committee." (Tavangar, 2003: 31)

"English is the language most often studied as a foreign language in the European Union (by 89% of school children), followed by French (32%), German (18%), and Spanish (8%). (Samen, 2004:76) In the EU, a large fraction of the population reports being able to converse to some extent in English. Among non-English speaking countries, a large percentage of the population claimed to be able to converse in English in the Netherlands (87%), Sweden (85%), Denmark (83%), Luxembourg (66%), Finland (60%), Slovenia (56%), Austria (53%), Belgium (52%), and Germany (51%). Norway and Iceland also have a large majority of competent English- speakers." (Mokri, 2006: 166)

Books, magazines, and newspapers written in English are available in many countries around the world. English is also the most commonly used language in the sciences. "In 2005, the Science Citation Index reported that 95% of its articles were written in English, even though only half of them came from authors in English-speaking countries." (Mokri, 2006: 168)

1.6.3 Dialects and Regional Varieties

"The expansion of the British Empire and - since WWII - the primacy of the United States have contributed to the spread English throughout the globe. Due to this global spread, English has developed a host of English dialects and English-based Creole languages and pidgins. The major varieties of English include, in most cases, several sub varieties, such as Cockney slang within British English; Newfoundland English within Canadian English; and African American Vernacular English ("Ebonics") and Southern American English within American English. English is a pluricentric language, without a central language authority like France's Académie Française; and, although no variety is clearly considered the only standard, there are a number of accents considered to be more prestigious, such as Received Pronunciation in Britain." (Tavangar, 2003: 35)

Just as English itself has borrowed words from many different languages over its history, English loanwords now appear in a great many languages around the world, indicative of the technological and cultural influence of its speakers. "Several pidgins and Creole languages have formed using an English base, such as Jamaican Creole, Nigerian Pidgin, and Tok Pisin. There are many words in English coined to describe forms of particular non-English languages that contain a very high proportion of English words. Franglais, for example, is used to describe French with a very high English word content; it

is found on the Channel Islands. Another variant, spoken in the border bilingual regions of Québec in Canada, is called FrEnglish." (Tavangar, 2003: 36)

1.7 The Persian Language

The Persian language, with the local names *Farsi*, which is the Arabicised of *Parsi*, is an Indo-European language spoken in Iran (Persia), Afghanistan and Tajikistan and by minorities in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Southern Russia, neighboring countries, and elsewhere. It is derived from the language of the ancient Persian people. It is part of the Iranian branch of the Indo-Iranian language family.

Persian and its varieties have official-language status in Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan. Based on the latest data released in the conference 'On Persian Language' held in Tajikistan in 2006, there are approximately 200 million native speakers of Persian in Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and other parts of the world.

Green denotes official language status; orange denotes minority language.
(Mahmoudi, 2006: 25)

The Persian language has various accents which are used by people in different areas inside Iran. Among the well-known accents are Tehrani, Yazdi, Shirazi, Kashani, Qomi, Esfahani, and Gilaki. All these accents are different from each other, to some extent, in pronunciation and vocabulary. Tehrani which is regarded as standard Persian has been selected to be used in this study.

Persian has been a medium for literary and scientific contributions to the Islamic world. It has had an influence on certain neighboring languages, particularly the Turkic languages of Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Anatolia.

For five centuries before British colonization, Persian was widely used as a second language in the Indian subcontinent; it gained importance as the language of culture and education in several Muslim courts in India and became the "official language" under the Mughal emperors. Evidence of Persian's historical influence in the region can be seen in the extent of its influence on the Urdu, Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, and Sindhi languages, as well as the popularity that Persian literature still enjoys in the region. Additionally, a small population of Persian speakers can be found in the urban and western highlands of Pakistan.

1.7.1 Classification

Persian has a *Subject Object Verb* (SOV) word order, but it is not strongly left-branching. The main clause precedes a subordinate clause. The interrogative particle 'آیا' [ɑjɑ], which asks a yes/no question, appears at the beginning of a sentence. Modifiers normally follow the nouns they modify, although they can precede nouns in limited uses. The language uses prepositions, uncommon to many SOV languages. The one case marker 'را' [rɑ] follows the accusative noun phrase.

Persian makes extensive use of word building and combining affixes, stems, nouns, and adjectives. Persian frequently uses derivational agglutination to form new words from nouns, adjectives, and verbal stems. New words are extensively formed by compounding, two existing words combining into a new one.

Normal sentences are structured subject-preposition-object-verb. If the object is specific, then the order is (S) (O + rɑ) (PP) V. However, "Persian can have relatively free word order, often called 'scrambling'. This is because the parts of speech are generally unambiguous, and prepositions and the accusative marker help disambiguate the case of a noun phrase. This scrambling characteristic has allowed Persian a high degree of flexibility for versification and rhyming." (Mahmoudi, 2006: 61)

Persian nouns have no grammatical gender. Persian nouns mark with an accusative marker only for the specific accusative case. The other oblique cases are marked by prepositions. Possession is expressed by special markers: if the possessor appears in the sentence after the thing possessed, the *ezafe* may be used; otherwise, alternatively, a pronominal genitive enclitic is employed. Inanimate nouns pluralize with 'ها' [hɑ], while animate nouns generally pluralize with 'آن' [ɑn], although 'ها' [hɑ] is also common. Special rules exist for some nouns borrowed from Arabic.

Persian is a null-subject, or pro-drop language, so nominal pronouns such as *I*, *he*, and *she* are optional. Pronouns are generally the same for all cases. The first person singular accusative form 'من را' [mæn rɑ] "me" can be shortened to 'مرا' [mærɑ]. "Pronominal genitive enclitics are, however, different from the normal pronouns. Possession is often expressed by adding suffixes to nouns. These are added after inflection for number. Adjectives typically follow the nouns they modify, using the *ezafe* construct. However, adjectives can precede nouns in compounded derivational forms, such as 'خوش بخت' [xɔʃ bæxt] (lit. god-luck) 'lucky', and 'بد کار' [bæd kɑr] (lit. bad-deed) 'wicked'. Comparative forms make use of the suffix 'تر' [tær] 'more', while the superlative form uses the suffix 'ترین' [tærin] 'the most'." (Fazel, 2005: 63)

Normal verbs can be formed using the following morpheme pattern:

(NEG – DUR or SUBJ/IMPER) – root – PAST – PERSON – ACC – ENCLITIC

• Negative prefix: 'næ' changes to *'ne'* before the Durative prefix.

• Durative prefix: 'mi'

• Subjunctive/Imperative prefix: 'be'

• Past suffix: 'd' changes to '*t*' after unvoiced consonants

• Optative identifier: an 'ɑ' is added to before the last character of the present tense ofsingular third person. Although there are suggestions that this inflection has been abandoned, significant remnants of its usage can still be observed in contemporary stylish Persian compositions and colloquial proverbs, as in ' **هر چه بادا باد** ' (meaning "come what may").

Light verbs such as '*kærdæn*' 'to do, to make' are often used with nuns to form what is called a compound verb. For example, the word ' **صحبت** ' [sɔhbæt] means 'conversation', while '**صحبت کردن**' means 'to speak'. One may add a light verb after a noun, adjective, preposition, or prepositional phrase to form a compound verb. Only the light verb (eg. *Kærdæn*) is conjugated; the word preceding it is not affected. For example:

'**دارم صحبت می کنم**' [dɑræm sɔhbæt mikɔnæm] 'I am speaking'

'**صحبت خواهم کرد**' [sɔhbæt xɑhæm kærd] 'I will speak'

'**صحبت کردم**' [sɔhbæt kærde æm] 'I have spoken'

Some auxiliary verbs such as '**باید**' [bɑjæd] 'must' and '**شاید**' [ʃɑjæd] 'might' are not conjugated, while some other auxiliaries like '**خواستن**' [xɑstæn] 'want' and '**توانستن**' [tævɑnestæn] 'can' are conjugated.

Prepositions in Persian generally behave similarly to those in English. They precede their object. Examples of Persian prepositions:

'اندر' [ændær] 'in', 'از' [æz] 'from', 'با' [bɑ] 'with', 'بر' [bær] 'on, upon', 'برای' [bærɑje] 'for', and 'به' [be] 'to'.

1.7.2 Local Names of Persian Language

(1) In Iran, the local name is Farsi.

(2) In Afghanistan, the name given to Persian is Parsi or Farsi, while it is officially known as Dari.

(3) In Tajikistan, the local name is Dari, while in Central Asia, primarily in those countries that were part of the former Soviet Union it is called Tajik

(4) The classical Persian poetry and court language as well as those Persian dialects spoken east of modern-day Iran are also called Dari.

1.7.3 Nomenclature

"Persian, the more widely used name of the language in English, is an Anglicized form derived from Latin Persianus and Persia as well as Greek Persis, a Hellenized form of Old Persian Parsa. The word Farsi is the arabicized form of "Parsi". Due to the absence of the [p] sound in Standard Arabic. Native Persian speakers typically refer to their language as "Fārsi". In English, however, the language continues to be known as "Persian". According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term 'Farsi' seems to have been first used in English in the mid-20th century, but has been condemned by some critics as an affectation." (Fazel, 2005: 13)

The Academy of Persian Language and Literature has argued in an official pronouncement that the name "Persian" is more appropriate, as it has the longer tradition in the western languages and better expresses the role of the language as a mark of cultural and national continuity. On the other hand, "Farsi" is also encountered frequently in the linguistic literature as a name for the language, used both by Iranian and by foreign authors, and is even preferred by some.

1.7.4 Dialects and Close Languages

There are three modern varieties for standard Persian:

a) Modern Iranian Persian is the variety of Persian spoken in Iran.

b) Dari is the local name for the Persian language spoken in Afghanistan.

c) Tajik is the variety of Persian used in Tajikistan, but unlike the Persian used in Iran and Afghanistan, it is written in the Cyrillic script rather than Arabic script.

The three mentioned varieties are based on the classic Persian literature. There are also several local dialects in Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan which slightly differ from the standard Persian.

Mahmoudi (2006: 26) offers the following classification for dialects of Persian language. According to this source, dialects of this language include the following:

(i) Western Persian, or Irani (Iran)
(ii) Eastern Persian (Afghanistan)
(iii) Tajik (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan)
(iv) Hazaragi (Afghanistan)
(v) Aimaq (Afghanistan)
(vi) Bukharic (Israel, Uzbekistan)
(vii) Darwazi (Afghanistan, Tajikistan)
(viii) Dzhidi (Israel, Iran)
(ix) Pahlavani (parts of Sistan and Afghanistan)

The regions where Persian (green) and other Iranian languages are spoken. (Mahmoudi, 2006: 27)

Persian is an Iranian tongue belonging to the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European family of languages. The oldest records in Old Persian date back to the great Persian Empire of the 6th century BC.

The known history of the Persian language can be divided into the following three distinct periods:

1.7.5 Old Persian

"Old Persian supposedly evolved from Proto-Iranian on the western wing in the Iranian plateau. The first known written evidence of Persian appears with the rise of the Persian Empire under Cyrus the Great of the Achaemenid Dynasty in 550 BC. Old Persian was the main official language of the Persian Empire at the time of the Achaemenids and with their rise, its domain extended to Libya to the west, present-day Ukraine to the north, the Indus river to the east and Yemen to the south, to be used as a lingua franca for over 200 years. The majority of inscriptions in Old Persian were found in Iran, Egypt and present-day Turkey. During this period, Persian was influenced by Aramaic, Elamite, Babylonian, Akkadian, Greek, Sanskrit, Hebrew, Lydian etc.. Persian also influenced many languages of its era, especially Hebrew. Under the Achaemenid Empire, Persian was written in cuneiform with its own distinct script. The Old Persian period ends with the fall of the Achaemenid dynasty." (Fazel, 2005: 116)

1.7.5.1 Parthian and Middle Persian (Pahlavi)

According to Fazel (Fazel, 2005: 117) Middle Persian can be divided into several periods within two remarkably different eras: "the Persian used at the time of the Parthian Empire (248 BCE–224 CE) and the Persian of the Sassanid Empire (224–651 CE). Middle Persian is often referred to as *Pahlavi* which was written in the script of the same name. Over this period, the morphology of the language was simplified from the complex

conjugation and declension system of Old Persian to the almost completely regularized morphology and rigid syntax of Middle Persian. Pahlavi coexisted with several other Iranian languages spoken throughout the Iranian plateau and Central Asia. These languages included Avestan, Sogdian, Bactrian, Khwarezmian, Saka, and Old Ossetic (Scytho-Sarmatian). Middle Persian influenced Arabic, Latin, Hindi, Armenian, Georgian, and other languages. Much of the literature in Middle Persian was lost due to the Arab invasion."

1.7.5.2 Classic Persian

The Islamic conquest of Persia marks the beginning of the modern history of Persian language and literature. It is known as the golden era of Persian. It saw world-famous poets and was for a long time the lingua franca of the eastern parts of the Islamic world and of the Indian subcontinent. It was also "the official and cultural language of many Islamic dynasties, including the Samanids, the Mughal Empires, the Timurids, the Ghaznavid, the Seljuq, the Safavid, and the Ottomans. The heavy influence of Persian on other languages can still be witnessed across the Islamic world, especially, and it is still appreciated as a literary and prestigious language among the educated elite, especially in fields of music (for example Qawwali) and the arts (Persian literature)." (Fazel, 2005: 119) After the Arab invasion of Persia, Persian began to borrow many words and structures from Arabic and as time went by, a few words were borrowed from Mongolian under the Mongolian empire and then from Turkish.

1.8 The Language Situation in Iran

Iranian (also called Aryan) peoples first crossed the Indus River into the Iranian plateau almost 3000 years ago. The Persians have been the most influential of these peoples and their language has served as the common language among the Aryans. The name

Persian or Farsi is taken from the Province of Fars in southern Iran. This region is the cradle of the Persian language and of the Persian empires of old. However, from their earliest days, the Persian empires were not merely Persian ethnic enterprises but conglomerate federations among various Aryan peoples. Therefore, "in Iran, which is a multi-ethnic nation, in addition to Persian, which is the official language and is spoken by 58% of the people, sizable minorities speak other languages such as Azari (26%), Kurdish (9%), Luri (2%), Baluchi (1%), Arabic (1%), and others (3%)." (Mahmoudi, 2006:11)

The following short accounts of each language are based on Mahmoudi's 2006:

1.8.1 Persian

Persian is the official language and is spoken throughout Iran by most of the population of 70 million people, most heavily concentrated in central, south central, and northeastern Iran. Only about half the population speak Persian as a native language, but virtually all educated Iranians are conversant in it.

1.8.2 Azari (Torki)

Azari (Torki) has various dialects which are spoken in several provinces such as East and West Azerbaijan, Ardebil, Zanjan, Qazvin, Hamedan, part of Markazi and Fars as well as other parts of Iran. This language belongs to the southern sub-group of Turkic languages.

1.8.3 Kurdish (Kurdi)

Kurdish (Kurdi) is mainly spoken in northwest Iran, primarily Kordestan, West Azerbayjan provinces, and areas north of Kermanshah. This language belongs to the

western sub-group of Iranian languages which belongs to the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family. This language has four dialects, namely Mukri, Sanandaji, Jafi, and Pijdari.

1.8.4 Lori

Lori belongs to the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family. This language is spoken in Kohkiluyeh and Boyerahmad province, Eastern Khuzestan province and Northwestern Fars province. The dialects of this language are Boyerahmadi, Yasuji, Kohkiloyeh, Mamasani, and Shuli.

1.8.5 Baluchi

Baluchi has two dialects, Western and Southern Baluchi. They belong to the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family. Western Baluchi is spoken in Northern Sistan va Baluchistan province, while Southern Baluchi is spoken in Southern Sistan and Baluchistan. Few people in this area speak Persian.

1.8.6 Arabic (Arabi)

Arabic (Arabi) has two dialects spoken in Iran, Mesopotamian and Gulf Arabic. They belong to the Afro-Asiatic branch of the Semitic language family. Mesopotamian Arabic is spoken in the Khuzestan province, on the southwest side of the Zagross Mountains, along the bank of the Arvand River. Gulf Arabic is spoken in the Southern Coast, Eastern Fars province, and some areas in several south central provinces of Iran. This language is taught as a foreign language in secondary schools along with English, but few

people can understand or speak Arabic, except those who learn Arabic as their first language.

1.8.7 English

English is the language which everyone must learn as part of compulsory education; however, the number of Iranians who can understand or speak this language is few.

1.9 The Teaching of English in Iran

In Iran, as any other countries in which English is taught as a foreign language, the communication needs are satisfied through the students' mother tongue. They continue to think and speak in their native language throughout their working day.

For Iranian students, the English language is solely a classroom activity which stops as soon as the bell announces the end of the class. They hardly have any opportunity for using the language after leaving the classroom. At school, the language is often no more than chalk, board, books and teacher. If the rate of the progress depends mostly upon the amount of time that is allotted to language acquisition, it is very slow indeed. The time available for English instruction at school is seldom more than four 60 minute weekly periods, and at the university level, it is about eight out of about 120 credit hours of undergraduate studies.

Teaching the English language, in Iran, usually starts in the secondary school and is directed to older age groups. Schools and universities are the governmental centers responsible for teaching English, and private Language Teaching Institutes are non-governmental centers where languages, including English are taught.

The teaching of English as a foreign language in Iran, due to the political, cultural, and social factors, is not of a high quality, and this results in poor performance of Iranian

graduates. This poor performance of English makes the Iranian students, in spite of their high technical skills, unfit for the labor market where English is the means of communication. Shortcomings are particularly observed in oral and written communication.

The actual problem may have its roots at the secondary school level, for it is at the secondary school level that the potential undergraduate is given adequate foundation in the use of English. A mastery of written and spoken language is highly desirable, yet its teaching and learning is beset by many problems and shortages. To mention some, secondary school teachers, traditionally, have depended on textbooks and chalkboards as media for spreading knowledge in the classroom. This means that the lecture method and intensive reading of textbooks are the only teaching techniques frequently used in secondary schools in Iran for teaching the English language. The group and debate methods are rarely used in the classes. With the current practice by English language teachers in secondary schools in Iran, the students are greatly deprived without access to modern instructional media.

With new instructional techniques, Galliher et al. (1995: 7) asserts that "teachers' roles are beginning to change"; and Paris (2002: 209) states that "the teachers' role as the 'sage on stage' who dispenses knowledge will shift to a role in which teachers are facilitators of learning when technology is integrated into the school curriculum." Yet the English language teachers in Iran are still the chief performers and dispensers of knowledge in the classroom.

In addition, most of the Iranian language learners do not learn English in environments conducive to effective learning. The classes are overcrowded, the furniture is not comfortable for proper sitting, and classrooms are without proper lighting and ventilation.

Most the non-governmental language institutes, where English and a few other languages, from elementary to advanced levels, are offered to students, also suffer, to some

extent, from the problems similar to those of secondary schools. A great number of the participants in these language institute programs cannot function as effectively and efficiently as expected. In these language centers, the teaching of the English Language is fraught with many problems such as inadequate contact hours, poor teaching methods, and lack of resources. What this means is that language teachers, in these institutes, are not altering their instructional practices in spite of availability of new instructional technologies.

The majority of the students who have not gained a good knowledge of English during their secondary school years or by attending programs in English language centers, are admitted into the universities in Iran. These students will not have any more opportunities to study English, except those who are admitted to Departments where English and related subjects are taught such as linguistics and literature in English. Although all the students admitted into the universities in Iran have to take a few English language courses, the contents of these courses are not adequate at all for the students to acquire skills in effective use of the language for communication purposes especially in their working life and in society in general.