

## FRENCH INTERLINGUAL INTERFERENCE IN THE ENGLISH COMPOSITIONS OF ALGERIAN PUPILS

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**Abstract:** The present research paper explores the cross-linguistic negative impact of French displayed in the English written compositions of Algerian learners. It identifies the types of interlingual errors resulting from French and attempts to trace their origins to understand their underlying causes. The objective is to address the research gap embodied in unravelling the nature of L2 influence on L3 acquisition and to move beyond the usual scope concerned with the influence of the mother tongue (L1) on newly acquired languages. The examined corpus, comprised of 98 texts written by fourth-year middle school pupils from Algeria, was analysed primarily through the application of error analysis techniques. The categorisation of data involved the use of thematic analysis principles, and the inferred interpretations were derived in light of contrastive analysis. The results determined the presence of three types of errors in learners' writings: lexical-semantic, grammatical and orthographic errors. Lexical errors involved the use of French vocabulary (code-switching/ pseudo-loans) and false cognates, while grammatical errors were embodied in the incorporation of faulty word order, addition of unnecessary articles, dropping the infinitive marker, omission of particles with phrasal verbs, and misuse of prepositions. Two types of orthographic errors related to the writing system of French were identified: spelling and capitalisation errors. Further research is still needed to fathom the interplay between the two languages and the mechanisms that govern cross-linguistic transfer within the Algerian multilingual context of education.

*Keywords:* Cross-linguistic transfer; French interference; grammatical errors; interlingual errors; lexical-semantic errors

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## 1. Introduction

One of the few available approaches that language researchers can exploit to gain insights into the mental processes involved in language learning is represented in examining the errors, or *lapsus linguae*, committed by learners during their quest to attain proficiency. Such an approach is deeply rooted in the educational culture, as explicitly mirrored in the evaluative systems underlying language learning programs. The purpose of many periodic assessments, after all, is to track the language development of learners based on a certain scoring scale that draws on the ratio of committed errors. The attained grade is supposed to be reflective, among other things, of the possessed skill and the accumulative knowledge concerning the target linguistic system. The presumption is that advancing to higher educational levels signifies enhanced linguistic and cognitive capacities. Departing from the former premise, it can be logically contended that intralingual and interlingual errors can open a window into the inner processes that allow progress to take place. This is backed up by the well-established fact that humans often learn through a trial-and-error mechanism (Gregg, 2003). While errors are an inherent part of learning, they need to be treated as soon as they arise to the surface to prevent the fossilisation of incorrect forms (Hasbún, 2007). Another reason for addressing errors lies in the objectives of language instruction itself, one of them being the re-creation of a native-like environment that promotes the acquisition of target forms. In such an environment, feedback is a key component that ensures the maintenance of correct discourse.

A lot of those errors may result from the false generalisations that a learner may form through a bottom-up process of reasoning that involves induction. These errors are called intralingual errors; that is, errors resulting from forming incorrect assumptions about how the target system operates, drawing on personal observations and inferences. The second type is embodied in interlingual errors, which take place whenever a violation of the norms of production is committed due to an interference inflected by the non-target-like linguistic aspects acquired at an earlier stage. The latter errors are common in bilingual and multilingual societies where learners are exposed to more than one language in everyday societal interaction or within the walls of pedagogical institutions. Even though these two types of errors are a part of the learning process, they should not go unnoticed by language educators if progress is expected to happen. Without corrective feedback, it is hard to contend that learners will receive the negative evidence that will aid them in filling the linguistic gaps in their repertoire (Saxton, 1997). Building on the elaboration above, it becomes evident that error correction is a key pedagogical practice that acts as a catalyst for learning. Yet, in order for corrective feedback to be successful, language instructors should be endowed in the first place with the capacity to identify and effectively react to errors when they occur.

Since the Algerian sociolinguistic situation is characterised by multilingualism (e.g. Achili), the process of learning a second or a third language is going to be always entrenched with the challenges of negative cross-linguistic transfer, which usually manifests in learners' performances. Such interference has been reported in relation to phonology (e.g. Berrabah & Benabed, 2021; Boutas & Kebsa, 2018), morphology and syntax (e.g. Hanifi, 2015), semantics (e.g. Isselnane, 2009; Seghier & Ghaouti, 2020), pragmatics (e.g. Dendenne, 2014), lexicon (e.g. Sadouki, 2020), as well as orthography and writing conventions (e.g. Gouider, 2025; Idri, 2019; Tamlali, 2016). Owing to the prominence of linguistic deviations and the facility with which they can be empirically observed and traced back to their sources, it becomes feasible to conduct a study that tackles negative cross-linguistic influence. In particular, the present research endeavours to unravel the nature of the influence exerted by French (L2) on English (L3) through the examination of the written output generated by

Algerian pupils. The significance of this study is associated with the limited number of empirical studies in the local context concerning the influence of French as a second language (SL) on learners' production in EFL. Also, the majority of the research papers that have approached the topic of linguistic interference relied on surveys and interviews, extracting data from self-reports by either teachers, learners, or both. Since such data is always subject to the subjectivity of participants, this study aims to address the topic differently, based on the examination of a large corpus composed of 98 compositions submitted at an examination administered for fourth-grade middle school pupils in Algeria. The corpus-based analysis facilitates the objective assessment of the linguistic levels affected by French interference. The qualitative analysis establishes the groundwork for interpreting the data in the light of contrastive analysis techniques and opens a vista into the cognitive processes and mechanisms that lead to the commitment of interlingual errors.

Based on the former considerations, this paper seeks to answer the following three research questions:

- 1- How does French interference influence the pupils' English lexicon, grammar and orthography?
- 2-What are the main sources of interlingual errors caused by French cross-linguistic interference?
- 3-In what ways do interlingual errors reflect learners' perceptions of the similarities and differences between French and English linguistic systems?

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1. The Concept of Language Transfer*

The phenomenon of language transfer is also referred to as cross-linguistic influence or interference. Yet, the term interference does not capture the whole picture of transfer, as it denotes only the negative influence exerted by one language on another. Cross-linguistic influence refers to the act of transferring the linguistic features of one language that has been previously acquired, perhaps imperfectly, to the target language through which someone wants to operate, owing to the similarities and differences between the two concerned linguistic codes (Odlin, 1989). Transfer has long been seen as a sign of sloppiness and a lack of sound thinking, and it was not until the late 1950s that a paradigm shift took place, when it was realised as an unavoidable element involved in learning new languages (Neuser, 2017). Cross-linguistic influence can manifest in two forms: positive and negative transfer. Even though most of the studies focus on negative transfer due to its traceability and ease of identification, the positive effects of the phenomenon usually outweigh the negative ones (Ecke, 2015).

Negative language transfer can affect every aspect of language, as can be noticed at the level of orthography, sound, structure, or meaning (Neuser, 2017). The sound system of the target language can be negatively influenced when alien sound units and phonological patterns are integrated into the target system. Language forms or structures are affected when non-target-like morphemes or syntactic structures are inserted. The impact on meaning occurs when the sense of individual words (semantic sense) is distorted or the misinterpretation of contextual information takes place due to the impact inflicted by a *background language*. Transfer can occur even at the conceptual level of thinking since language has long been shown to influence thought in what is known as *linguistic relativity*. This can be mirrored in the altered processing of concepts related to space, time, and affect, depending on the languages spoken by the individual (Odlin, 2005). Language transfer has been traditionally defined as the impact brought about by an L1 on the target language. Nevertheless, over the

last four decades, a lot of scholars have been stressing that the former definition is overly simplistic and does not capture the whole reality of transfer as it fails to account, for instance, the potential effects that stem from L2 and impact the mother tongue (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008). The impact is not always unidirectional, as the linguistic features of any background language can be transmitted to another language within the repertoire of the speaker.

### 2.1.1. *The Role of Typological Similarity in Transfer*

In multilingual contexts of learning an L3, the native language of an individual is often perceived to be the most dominant one in terms of the transfer that would be reflected in someone's production in the target language. This can be particularly true when it comes to the transfer of meaning (Ringbom, 1986). Yet, this is not always the default parameter since the impact of the second language (L2) can sometimes be more significant than that of an L1. One of the most influential factors that can change the equation is represented in typological similarity. The *background language*, which has a disproportionate number of shared features with the *recipient language*, whether being an L1 or L2, language cross-linguistic influence is more likely to manifest in the *recipient language*, especially in terms of transfer of form (De Angelis & Selinker, 2001). Transfer of meaning from L2 to L3 is less probable when the proficiency in L2 is low, yet it can take place if L2 proficiency reaches a sufficiently advanced level (Ringbom, 2001).

### 2.1.2. *The Recency Factor*

Another factor that has been the focus of researchers targeting the phenomenon of cross-linguistic interference is embodied in the recency variable (e.g. Dewaele, 1998; Poullisse, 1999; Williams & Hammarberg, 1998). This variable pertains to how languages that have been recently used are more likely to be activated in the performance of individuals who speak more than one language. The aspect of recency tends to be more evident in the output of multilingual speakers (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008). Recency is also sometimes associated in the literature with the last language that has been acquired just prior to the target language (e.g. Dewaele, 1998; Williams & Hammarberg, 1998). Therefore, there are two mainstream ways of conceptualising the recency factor: as related to the language most recently learnt or to the language most recently utilised (e.g. Neuser, 2017). In the context of learning English as a third language (L3) following French as a second language (L2) within the multilingual educational system of Algeria, French ordinarily represents the language most recently acquired just prior to English. This temporal proximity suggests that French may exert a significant influence due to its recency, leading to more noticeable interference in the learners' English production. Additionally, because French is sometimes activated in educational and social contexts, its influence could be compounded, further increasing the likelihood of cross-linguistic interference. Thus, both the recency of acquisition and activation of French may play crucial roles in shaping the English language performance of Algerian learners.

## 2.2. *The Algerian Linguistic Situation: Beyond Bilingualism*

As far as learning EFL in Algeria is concerned, it can be asserted that the situation is intricate as it is characterised by a nuanced and multifaceted landscape, portraying the rich linguistic tapestry of the nation. The Algerian linguistic milieu is primarily entrenched with two principal *mother tongues* (MT) which are widely used in everyday communication: *Algerian Arabic* and *Tamazight* (Berber). Alongside Standard Arabic, the first language (L1) taught in public schools, French is introduced as a second language (L2) in the Algerian educational system from an early age, typically around 8 years old. French is extensively employed across various formal communicative contexts, including political discourse, professional exchanges, and official media. The status of English has been elevating over the last two decades in alignment with technological advancements, globalisation, and the new

policies of the Algerian government. With the latest educational reform that has been implemented since the academic year 2022/2023, English is now taught at primary schools starting from the third grade. The concurrent tutoring of English and French at the same grade marks a departure from the previous system. Following the former reforms in the Algerian curriculum, French and English are now taught simultaneously at primary schools in contrast with the older system where English was not taught until the first year at middle school (Imerzoukene, 2023).

### 2.2.1. Algerian Native Languages

Algerian Arabic (AA) serves as the predominant native language for the majority of Algerians since it is the first spoken language of 80-85% of the population (Benrabah, 2005). Berber varieties like *Kabyle* and *Tachawit* are predominantly spoken in specific areas of the country, such as the Great Kabylie (mainly Tizi-Ouzou, Bejaia, and Bouira provinces) and Chawi region (notably in Batna, Khenchela, and Ouem El Bouaghi provinces). Even though these Berber varieties are not commonly used in societal interactions within the broader Arabophone territories, they can still maintain a presence at the level of households, since they are considered to be a part of the national heritage and identity for many speakers who identify with the Berber ethnic group. The standardised form of Berber, Tamazight, is the second of the two national languages in Algeria, alongside Arabic. Tamazight was established as a national language through a constitutional amendment that took place in May 2002 and was further elevated to both a national and official language in February 2016, as decreed by the third and fourth articles of the reformed constitution of 2016 (Bouherar & Ghafsi, 2022; Hamdan & Kessar, 2023). Notably, Berber was first incorporated as an optional language in primary schools for fourth-grade pupils in 2005 (Hamdan & Kessar, 2023).

### 2.2.2. The Algerian Diglossic Situation

The Algerian linguistic landscape is characterised by Arabic diglossia, wherein Standard Arabic assumes the role of the high (H) variety, and Algerian Arabic (AA) functions as the low (L) variety, both coexisting within the broader Arabophone linguistic milieu. The usage of Arabic in Algeria varies according to the situational context of communication. In everyday interactions, Algerian Arabic (AA) is the primary vehicle of communication, for it tends to dominate the daily verbal discourse across a wide range of activities and settings. This includes conversations within households, transactions in markets, interactions on social media, exchanges on public transportation, communications in the workplace, and discussions at social gatherings. The lexis of AA has been substantially influenced by French over the last two centuries from the historical contact of the two languages during the French colonial period in Algeria, extending from 1830 to 1962 (Benrabah, 2005). The evolution of AA in terms of French loan words is still taking place due to the frequent use of French in social media. Also, new words from French are being incorporated into the system of AA because of the huge Algerian diaspora living in France, said to be the largest in the country (Luna-Dubois, 2023), and their ties with their homeland. Standard Arabic tends to be predominant in the linguistic registers associated with the national system of education, parts of the administrative domain, alongside mass media, while Algerian Arabic serves as the primary vehicle of informal communication among both the general populace and intelligentsia of the country (Benrabah, 2005).

There is another type of diglossia in which Algerian Arabic and Tamazight represent the *L-varieties* and French embodies the high variety. French is predominantly employed in formal contexts by the educated segment of the population, although it may occasionally be used within households in major urban centres and regional metropolises. As *H-varieties*, French and standard Arabic are seen to have a quasi-equal status on the diglossic spectrum

since each one of them serves to fulfil distinct functions (see Djennane, 2014). The two languages lie in complementary distribution where French use is often reserved for functions related to economic roles while Standard Arabic maintains other ones associated with displaying cultural power (Benrabah, 2005; Mammeri, 2018). Though French, as a foreign language, has been traditionally regarded as a language of prestige, its status has been declining over the past decade in favour of English (e.g. Abdaoui & El Aggoune, 2023; Belmihoub, 2018; Benrabah, 2013, 2014; Sahraoui, 2020). This shift reflects the growing interest among new generations in learning English, driven by both instrumental and integrative motivation related to mastering the lingua Franca of the world.

### **3. Methodology**

This study involves a descriptive corpus-based study that employs a qualitative method to investigate the data and address the research questions. It incorporates a retrospective design, scrutinising a collection of records represented in pupils' examination answers. Those collected records make up the corpus comprised of 98 compositions submitted in the first-trimester examination directed to fourth-year pupils at an Algerian middle school. The theme of these compositions required learners to compose an email in which they describe their wishes if they were to discover Aladdin's magic lamp. The significance of the corpus lies in being a part of an official examination wherein pupils are expected to be motivated enough to fully exploit their linguistic knowledge of English in writing those compositions. The extrinsic motivation tied to achieving good marks is supposed to act as a catalyst for pupils and to trigger their mental resources to perform well in the examination. The primary objective of analysing the corpus is to disclose the nature of the influence exerted by French (L2) on the written productions of English (L3).

#### *3.1. Participants*

The sample of participants involved in this study is composed of 98 pupils studying at a middle school in the province of Eltarf, Algeria. It represents a purposive convenience sample since participants were selected based on the principles of availability and feasibility. The essays corresponding to participants comprised the available data to this researcher, as they served ideally the objectives of this research, since the low proficiency level of the pupils can open a vista into the aspects of transfer as they struggle to generate output in a language they are still striving to master. The participants were aged between 14 to 17 years old as they had been studying English for 3 years. Their linguistic repertoire consists of Algerian Arabic (mother tongue), standard Arabic (the L1 learned at school), French (L2), and English (L3). The sample is homogeneous since all of the pupils were exposed only to these languages throughout their educational journey.

#### *3.2. Instruments and Procedures*

The process of data collection took place after getting permission from a middle school in the province of El-Tarf to access the exam papers of pupils submitted in the first trimester of the academic year 2017/2018. The compositions were allotted 8 points out of a scale of 20. Data were gathered by photographing the written compositions of learners using a digital camera. The procedure led to the collection of graphic representations of 98 texts that belong to different pupils, constituting the corpus under examination. Subsequently, the process of data analysis was conducted through the incorporation of a triangulated approach. This methodology incorporated various theoretical frameworks, namely: error analysis, thematic analysis and contrastive analysis. Error and thematic analyses were used for identifying and determining the nature of errors, while contrastive analysis provided interpretive insights into the results.

### 3.3. Coding and Categorising Errors

The process of coding interlingual errors caused by French was kept distinct from the errors resulting from Arabic, as the linguistic deviations from each language were mutually exclusive. That is to say, once an error was perceived to be related to Arabic, it was deemed outside the scope of the present paper. The impact of Arabic on learners' output will be addressed in another paper since that theme falls beyond the parameters of this study. The categorization of errors was based on the specific nature of the errors observed in the learners' output. Thus, the utilised classification framework was developed directly from the errors identified through corpus analysis. Three macro types of errors related to French were coded: lexical-semantic, grammatical and orthographic errors. Each one of these was further subdivided into its constituent categories.

French-induced lexical errors included two categories, namely: borrowings and semantic errors. Borrowings embodied the use of code-switching and non-target-like vocabulary in English texts. Semantic errors were identified when learners erroneously treated false cognates as having equivalent meanings in English and French. These errors were discerned based on contextual analysis. Grammatical errors were noted whenever the morpho-syntactic levels of English were influenced by the cross-linguistic transfer inflected by French. Five categories of grammatical errors were identified: erroneous word order, incorrect article usage, faulty infinitive forms, omission of particles with phrasal verbs and the misuse of prepositions. Orthographic errors were characterised by the violation of the conventions related to the English writing system. Two categories of orthographic errors were involved: spelling and capitalization errors. Each category will be elaborated on separately in the following subsections.

## 4. Results and Discussion

Having outlined the methodology, this study will delineate the nature of French negative transfer according to each type of error while offering representative examples from the corpus, accompanied by the researcher's correction. The findings presented in the following subsections are intended to address the next research questions: 1- How does French interference influence the pupils' English lexicon, grammar and orthography? 2- What are the main sources of interlingual errors caused by French cross-linguistic interference? 3- In what ways do interlingual errors reflect learners' perceptions of the similarities and differences between French and English linguistic systems? It is worth noting that the samples of errors used for elaboration often show multiple linguistic deviations within the same utterances due to the pupils' low proficiency level in both English and French.

### 4.1. Lexical Errors

Two types of lexical errors related to French were observed in the examined corpus: foreign word incorporation and the use of false cognates. The former type embodies the use of French vocabulary in English texts, while the latter represents using French target-like words that have different meanings in English.

#### 4.1.1. Lexical Borrowings: Code-Switching and Pseudo-Loans

Many Algerian learners resorted to code-switching and lexical borrowing from French in their English texts as a strategy to compensate for their linguistic deficiencies in English. However, the foreign lexemes incorporated are often incorrect, even within the framework of French usage. This is due to the reality that those pupils did not possess a satisfactory level in French either. A lot of those so-called borrowings represented what can be termed "*pseudo-loans*". For instance, in the statement "my dream is 'verity'", the misspelt word "verity" seems to be a distortion of the French word "vérité", which translates to "truth" in English. At

the conceptual level, the faulty expression seems to be a literal translation of the Arabic phrase “يصبح حلمي حقيقة” in which the word “حقيقة” is the equivalent of the French “verité” and English “truth”.

This means that learners were thinking in Arabic when operating in English, and compensating for their English lexical gaps by drawing on French vocabulary. Given that their proficiency in French (L2) was relatively higher than English (L3), they often opted to retrieve items from their L2 repertoire owing to the perceived typological similarity between the two languages (see Ringbom, 1986). Foreign words did not involve only *content words* but also *function or grammatical words*. For example, instead of saying “in the future” one pupil wrote “en future” using the preposition “en” which superficially corresponds to “in” in this context. These instances attest to the negative transfer occurring between the learners' L1 (Arabic), L2 (French), and L3 (English), leading to the production of hybrid linguistic forms that were neither fully accurate in French nor appropriate in English. The tendency of Algerian pupils to incorporate distorted French loans was likewise displayed in other corpus-based studies conducted by Hanifi (2015) and Isselnane (2009). Samples of similar interlingual errors are shown below:

**Table 1**

*Excerpts of Foreign Word Use, Error Source and Correction*

Category	Exemplary Error/Source of Error	Corrected Version
Foreign words (Direct borrowings)	1- This is my “three dream”, when I finish my dream is ‘ <u>verity</u> ’.	1- My dream becomes a <u>reality</u> .
	2- I <u>don’t meliar</u> of erou, money doesn’t buy happiness (Je ne veux pas d’un <i>milliard</i> d’euros, car l’argent ne fait pas le bonheur)	2- I do not want one billion euros, because money does not buy happiness.
	3- I will ‘ <u>commonndon</u> ’ of ‘armi’ (Je serai <i>commandant</i> dans l’armée)	3- I will be a commander in the army.
	4- I want have the ‘ <u>heure</u> ’ of time for back to ‘the praimery school’.	4- I want to have a time machine to return back to the primary school.
	5- ... find ‘Aladdin magic’ ‘ <u>en</u> ’ future.	5- ... to find magic Aladdin <u>in</u> the future.

#### 4.1.2. Typological Proximity and Lexical-Semantic Confusion: False Cognates Incorporation or Code-Switching?

The second type of lexical errors involved the use of “false cognates” or “interlingual homonyms”. A lot of pupils seemed unaware of the lexical-semantic disparities and nuances existing between French and English. For example, the word “premier” in the statement “Premier wishes, I marry...” is used to denote the ordinal sequence of events, as if it stood for “my first wish is to marry...”. In English, when used as an adjective, the word “premier” denotes ultimate high rank or importance rather than functioning as an ordinal number, as it does in French. Similarly, the phrase “I marche to” contained a *lexical-semantic error* since “march” was mistakenly interpreted to be equivalent to “walking”. Other errors are embodied in equating the French word “brevet” (certificate) with “brevet” in English, which actually means a military document or a government warrant rather than a certificate. The same for misinterpreting the French “note”, which was incorrectly used by pupils to mean “mark” in English, as in “I would like to take my brevet exam with a good note”. It is a bit difficult to determine decisively whether pupils incorporated the words “premier”, “march”, and “brevet” as a *compensatory strategy* due to *lexical gaps* in their English vocabulary, thereby opting to *code-switch* intentionally, or whether they recognized these words in English but were unaware of their divergent meanings.



If the latter possibility is the case, then such erroneous productions are a direct result of *false cognate* interference. The perceived typological proximity between the two languages might have led the pupils to insert these words, under the assumption that the two linguistic systems share a significant number of lexical items with similar functions (see Ringbom, 1986). However, the first possibility, intentional *code-switching*, is the most plausible, supported by the fact that these words are relatively uncommon in English, typically appearing at the C1 level or higher in English dictionaries. This discrepancy between the novice level of the pupils and the usage of sophisticated vocabulary suggests that these productions involved moments of code-switching to the French language, where such words are more common in communication. Additionally, the context in which these errors were committed further suggests the first possibility. In either case, these errors reflect clear instances of French lexical interference in the pupils' written compositions. Nonetheless, regardless of the underlying intention, which cannot be definitively determined, these errors are categorised based on their superficial appearance as false cognates. Such a classification aligns with the conventions of categorisation prevalent in the literature, in which the focus is on what is actually transferred rather than the reason underlying the transfer (see Ringbom, 1987; Neuser, 2017). The occurrence of this kind of semantic deviation is consistent with results from other local studies (e.g. Seghier & Ghaouti, 2020). Further elaboration on the former errors is displayed below:

**Table 2**

*Excerpts of False Cognates, Error Source, and Correction*

Error Category	Exemplary Error/Source of Error	Corrected Version
False Cognates (Semantic errors)	1- ' <u>Premier</u> ' wishes, I marry... (Mon <i>premier</i> souhait est d'épouser ...)	1- My first wish is to marry...
	2- I ' <u>marche</u> ' to... (Je <i>marche</i> vers...)	2- I walk to...
	3- ... I would like to take my <u>brevet</u> exam with a good <u>note</u> (J'aimerais passer mon examen du <i>brevet</i> avec une bonne note.)	3- I would like to get a high mark in the certification exam.

#### 4.2. Grammatical errors

Grammatical errors were characterised by linguistic deviations at the morphosyntactic level of production. Five different categories of grammatical errors were coded, namely: faulty word order, the use of articles, infinitive forms, phrasal verbs (omission of particles) and prepositional errors. Each one of these will be examined separately in the following subsections.

##### 4.2.1. Misplacement of Adjectives and Adverbial Phrases: Patterns of Faulty Word Order

Syntactic errors involving placing adjectives after the nouns they modify represent another common error in the corpus. Such a faulty word order is linked to the pupils' background knowledge of French, where such syntactic patterns are possible. Unlike English, French permits placing adjectives as *postmodifiers* as well as *premodifiers* depending on the context. Consequently, this transferred syntactic structure manifests in erroneous constructions like "Aladin is friend magic" and "I remember every moment happy with my friend", where the adjectives follow the nouns they are intended to modify. Other erroneous productions of this sort, like "the 'hase' big" or "I 'has' job good", might be also attributed to Arabic since in French the adjectives that describe size (e.g. big or small) and evaluative qualities reflecting goodness (e.g. good or bad) are typically placed before nouns. Yet, given

that French adjectives are predominantly placed as post-modifiers and taking into account the pupils' inadequate proficiency in French, we contend that these errors are more likely attributable to interference from French (L2) rather than Arabic (L1). What further consolidates this argument is represented in the pupils' perceived typological proximity between French and English and how such recognition makes them more likely to transfer these aspects from their L2 rather than L1. The earlier syntactic errors are similar to those documented by Hanifi (2015), suggesting a consistent pattern across studies.

Another category of syntactic errors involved placing adverbial phrases before the object of the verb, in a way that simulates French grammatical patterns. For example, the structure of the sentence "I like so much this job" is a projection of the French structure "J'aime tellement ce travail". As can be noted, the French adverb "tellement" is placed before the verb and not vice versa. Yet, English grammar dictates that adverbial phrases should follow the object of a transitive verb or the complement of a linking verb. It is worth noting that the French-induced interlingual errors corresponding to the misplacement of adverbial phrases were far less frequent than those involving the misplacement of adjectives. Other examples are illustrated below:

**Table 3**

*Excerpts of Faulty Word Order, Error Source, and Correction*

Error Category	Exemplary Error/Source of Error	Corrected Version
Word Order	1-...Aladin is <u>friend magic</u> . (Aladdin est un <i>ami magique</i> )	1-... Aladdin is a magical friend.
	2-...the ' <u>hase</u> ' <u>big</u> (La <i>grande maison</i> )	2-...the big house.
	3-...I remember every <u>moment happy</u> with my friend (Je me souviens de chaque <i>moment heureux</i> avec mon ami)	3- ...I remember every happy moment with my friend.
	4-...I 'migh' wish for a <u>health good</u> . (Je pourrais souhaiter une <i>bonne santé</i> )	4-...I might wish for good health.
	5-...I like <u>so much</u> this job (J'aime <i>tellement</i> ce travail)	5-... I like this job so much.
	6-...I has job good (J'ai un <i>bon travail</i> ).	6-... I have a good job.

#### 4.2.2. French Interference in Article Usage: Addition Errors

French-induced errors related to articles primarily involved unnecessary additions. These errors were most commonly observed before nouns that refer to general concepts, like writing "I can 'success' with the self determination" where a definite article is erroneously added to the generic term "self-determination". This utterance stems from the French equivalent structure "Je peux réussir avec l'autodétermination", where the definite article "l' " (the) is required, since, unlike English, abstract nouns and general concepts typically take definite articles in French grammar. Similar patterns were reported by Isselnane (2009) and Hanifi (2015), particularly regarding the addition of unnecessary definite articles in contexts involving generic references.

The other type of observed unnecessary addition of articles pertained to instances where two determiners instead of a single one were used in lists containing binary items. A representative example is found in the sentence "I 'wish would' much money and the happiness" in which the definite article "the" (equivalent of French "de" in this context) is mistakenly added mirroring the French construction "Je souhaiterais avoir beaucoup d'argent et de bonheur" where two partitive articles "de" are required. Some pupils seemed ignorant of

how the two languages differ in expressing consistency. French requires the partitive article "de" with each quantified noun to maintain grammatical consistency, whereas English allows for a more streamlined approach by using a single determiner when meaning is evident from the context. Therefore, the correct version—"I would wish to have much money and happiness"—uses a single determiner or quantifier ('much') to modify both nouns, which would have been sufficient to convey the idea. Other examples are shown below:

**Table 4**

*Excerpts of Articles' Additions, Error Source, and Correction*

Error Category	Exemplary Error/Source of Error	Corrected Version
Articles (Addition Errors)	1-...I can 'succeed' with <u>the</u> self determination. (Je peux réussir grâce à l'autodétermination)	1-...I can succeed with self-determination.
	2-...I 'wish would' much money and <u>the</u> happiness. (J'aimerais avoir beaucoup d'argent et de bonheur)	2-...I would wish to have much money and happiness.
	3-I would to help <u>the</u> people (J'aimerais aider les gens)	3-I would like to help people.
	4- First, I wish <u>the</u> good 'helth' (D'abord, je souhaite une bonne santé.)	4-First, I wish for good health.
	5- The second wish is <u>the</u> happiness in my 'family'. (Le deuxième souhait est le bonheur dans ma famille)	5- Second, I wish for happiness in my family.

#### 4.2.3. Infinitive Marker Omission in Non-Finite Verb Constructions

The deletion of the infinitive marker in non-finite verbs was another recurrent error in the corpus. A lot of pupils generated expressions such as "I wish become" and "I like help people" where bare infinitives were incorrectly employed. Such errors seem to be associated with transferring the French syntactic structures "Je souhaite devenir" and "J'aime aider les gens" respectively. As can be noted, French grammar dictates that when one verb directly follows another, the second appears in its infinitive form without the need for an infinitive marker equivalent to the English function word "to". This default use of infinitives in French appears to have been transferred to English, leading to these syntactic errors. Further examples are displayed in the next table:

**Table 5**

*Excerpts of Infinitive Marker Omission, Error Source, and Correction*

Error Category	Exemplary Error/Source of Error	Corrected Version
Infinitive Marker (Omission Errors)	1- I wish __ <sup>*1</sup> become in the future' teacher. (Je souhaite devenir enseignant à l'avenir.)	1-I wish to become a teacher in the future...
	2-I like __ help people (J'aime aider les gens)	2-I like to help people.
	3-I want __ travel by 'plan' and boat (Je veux voyager en avion et en bateau)	3-I want to travel by plane and boat.
	4-I 'wont' __ go to 'london' (Je veux aller à Londres.)	4-I want to go to London.

Note: <sup>\*1</sup> Each blank line (\_\_) indicates an instance of omission

#### 4.2.4. Particle Omission in Phrasal Verb Constructions

Since particles and prepositions are considered different lexical categories in traditional grammar, a discrete section is devised for the analysis of errors that belong to each category. Phrasal verb errors refer to the omission of particles in utterances that need the incorporation of phrasal verbs. Dropping particles with complex verb forms often led to ungrammatical sentences and a slight distortion of meaning. This is reflected in statements such as “I wish a very beautiful big house” and “I am waiting your letter” where phrasal verbs lack the particle “for”. The same concepts of “waiting for” and “wishing for” are conveyed in French with single verbs rather than phrasal verbs, as can be noted in the equivalent statements “J’attends ta lettre” and “Je souhaite une très belle grande maison”. In French grammar, those verbs function independently without the need for a particle to complete their meaning. Therefore, it is argued that pupils appeared to be literally translating from their L2 while overlooking the unique feature of English represented in phrasal verbs, especially considering that such a grammatical feature does not exist in French, which is perceived to be typologically similar to English. These interlingual errors are particularly salient because they point to a failure to discern one of the fundamental differences in verb structure between English and French. Further examples are exhibited in the next table:

**Table 6**

*Excerpts of Particle Omission, Errors Source, and Correction*

Error Category	Exemplary Error/Source of Error	Corrected Version
Phrasal Verbs Errors	1-I wish __ <sup>*1</sup> a very beautiful big house. (Je <i>souhaite</i> une très belle grande maison)	1-I wish for a very beautiful big house.
	2-I am waiting __ your letter. (J' <i>attends</i> ta lettre)	2-I am waiting for you letter.
	3-I wish __ the good ‘helth’. (Je <i>souhaite</i> une bonne santé)	3-I wish for good health.
	4-If I find a magic lamp, I wish __ 3 wishes (Si je trouve une lampe magique, je <i>fais</i> trois vœux.)	4-If I find a magic lamp, I would wish for three wishes.
	5-I wish __ the ‘foreover live’. (Je <i>souhaite</i> la vie éternelle)	5-I wish for an eternal life.

Note: <sup>\*1</sup> Each blank line (\_\_) indicates an instance of omission

#### 4.2.5. Interference Patterns in Prepositional Usage: Addition and Omission Errors

Errors related to prepositions consisted of two main types: addition and omission. The former type was the most frequent in the examined corpus as it was manifested in the superfluous inclusion of the preposition “of” in statements like “when I have enough of money” and “200 millions of dolar”. These errors are attributable to the transfer of French syntactic patterns where the partitive article “de” is employed, as seen in French constructions like “Quand j’aurai assez d’argent” and “200 millions de dollars”. Because the French partitive article “de” often functions similarly to the English preposition “of”, pupils seemed to generalise this usage across various contexts. It appears that through induction, pupils have built a conceptualisation of how L2 usage of prepositions can be transferred to L3. For instance, the partitive article “de” in the following statements “le livre de Ali” and “beaucoup de personne” can be respectively translated to English as “the book of Ali” and “a lot of people”. However, the English idiomatic expressions that do not conform to this generalisation reveal exceptions to this rule. The pupils’ incorrect association of “de” with “of” in English is a reflection of their inability to understand these exceptions. Additionally,

the omission of prepositions, particularly the preposition “in”, was observed in statements such as “I will succeed my BEM and BAC” which arguably stem from the French statement “Je réussirai mes examens BEM et BAC” where no preposition is required. Nevertheless, the French-induced errors involving the omission of prepositions were rarely committed by pupils. This does not fall in line with previous research, where the frequency of omission errors exceeded that one pertaining to addition (e.g. Isselane, 2009). Further examples are displayed in the next table:

**Table 7**  
*Excerpts of Preposition Errors, Source, and Correction*

Error Category	Exemplary Error/Source of Error	Corrected Version
Prepositions' Errors (Addition and Omission Errors)	1-...when I have enough <u>of</u> money. (Quand j'aurai assez <i>d'argent</i> )	1-...when I have enough money
	2-I wach 200 millions <u>of</u> dolar. (Je souhaite avoir 200 millions <i>de</i> dollars)	2-I wish to have 200 million dollars.
	3-I will succeed <u>__</u> my BEM and BAC. (Je <i>réussirai</i> mes examens du BEM et du BAC)	3- I will succeed in my BEM and BAC exams.
	4-‘meliar’ <u>of</u> ‘erou’ (Un milliard <i>d'euros</i> )	4- ...a billion euros.

#### 4.3. Orthographic Deviations

Orthographic errors took place when French-induced errors were committed at the level of the English writing system. Two types of orthographic errors were coded: spelling and capitalisation errors.

##### 4.3.1. Spelling Errors

Misspelling English vocabulary in a manner that simulates French spelling was observed at the level of lexical items shared by the two languages. Some representative examples involved writing “futur” rather than “future”, “acteur” rather than “actor”, “finale” instead of “final” etc. Owing to the inadequate level of pupils in both French and English, a lot of those words did not apply to the orthographic norms of either language. Yet, the influence of French in terms of transferred graphemes was very evident in pupils’ writings. French-induced spelling mistakes have been documented in other local studies (e.g. Temlali, 2016).

**Table 8**  
*Excerpts of Misspelling, Error Source, and Correction*

Category	Exemplary Error/Source of Error	Corrected Version
Spelling	1-...in the ‘ <u>futur</u> ’ (...dans le <i>futur</i> )	1-...in your future life.
	2-...a good ‘ <u>acteur</u> ’ in ‘france’ (un bon <i>acteur</i> en France)	2-...a good actor in France.
	3-I dream in the future good ‘ <u>footbaleur</u> ’ (Je rêve de devenir un bon <i>footballeur</i> dans le futur)	3-I dream of becoming a good footballer in the future.
	4- The ‘ <u>finale</u> ’ wish.	4-The final wish.
	5- Lampe.	5- lamp.

### 4.3.2. Capitalisation Errors

The analysis revealed three primary types of capitalization errors: (1) writing names in full capital letters, (2) using lowercase letters for the names of days, and (3) employing lowercase letters for titles of respect. The first category of errors is manifested in the transfer of the French writing style required for writing last names in official documents, since writing personal names in full caps does not belong to the conventions of the English writing system. It is worth noting that pupils applied this aspect of French writing incorrectly in English since they capitalised their first names (e.g. The Arabic birth names NOUR, ILHEM, OUMAIMA.) instead of their last names. This error suggests a lack of proficiency not only in English orthography but also in understanding French capitalisation conventions. The second and third categories related to writing names of days in lowercase letters (e.g. ‘monday’ instead of ‘Monday’ ) and titles of respect (e.g. “madame” instead of “Madam”) allude once again to the pupils’ ignorance of the peculiarities of the English writing system.

**Table 9**

*Excerpts of Capitalisation, Error Source, and Correction*

Error Category	Exemplary Error/Source of Error	Corrected Version
Capitalisation Errors	1- NOUR	1-Nour.
	2-On ‘ <u>monday</u> ’. (Le <i>lundi</i> )	2-On Monday.
	3- Dear ‘ <u>madame</u> ’ (Chère <i>madame</i> .)	3-Dear Madam.
	4- ILHEM	4-Ilhem.
	5- OUMAIMA	5-Oumaima.

## 5. Conclusion

This research paper was conducted with the purpose of identifying the nature of the impact exerted by the French language on the written output of Algerian novice pupils. The results have shown that such cross-linguistic interference influences different dimensions of production, extending from morphosyntactic structures to the lexical-semantic aspects of output as well as the English writing system. The lexical errors involving code-switching and the use of pseudo-loans implied a need for equipping learners with communicative compensation strategies that they can use to fill the gaps in their linguistic knowledge when they fail to retrieve the right lexical item or are unable to recall the appropriate language forms. Teaching pupils strategies like circumlocution, incorporation of synonyms, and approximation can be very effective in minimising the pupils’ tendency for code-switching. The lexical errors pertaining to the insertion of false cognates suggest raising the learners’ awareness of interlingual homonyms and their divergent meanings across languages.

Grammatical errors related to the use of faulty word order patterns imply that pupils should be informed about the function of English adjectives as pre-noun modifiers rather than thinking of them as post-noun modifiers. The same applies to the correct placement of adverbial phrases after the objects and complements of verbs, rather than the other way around. The incorrect addition of articles before generic nouns, along with the use of multiple determiners before every item in binary lists, implies a need for ameliorating the pupils’ capacity to distinguish between the conventional usage of articles in French vis-à-vis English. Furthermore, the recurrent dropping of the infinitive marker in non-finite verbs entails that a lot of pupils are unaware of this specific English verb structure and that classroom activities should be designed to address this issue. The omission of necessary particles that should accompany complex verb forms accentuates the importance of explicit instruction in phrasal verbs for learners transitioning between these languages, as the errors suggest a lack of

awareness of this critical structural difference. The findings further indicate that pupils need to internalise the idiomatic use of prepositions and recognise that there are exceptions and non-generalisable rules that come into effect when determining the right prepositions to use. This can be maintained inside the classroom by being vocal about the inconvenience of adopting direct translation strategies that draw on the L2 norms of usage for the selection of English prepositions.

A lot of distorted orthographic forms indicated a lack of proficiency not only in English but also in French. Orthographic distortions were more conspicuous in cognates that have slight spelling differences, as shown by the non-target-like graphemes transferred from French. In addition, an evident transfer of French writing conventions manifested in the use of full caps when writing proper names and applying lowercase letters for writing days and titles of respect. Overall, the analysis points to the essential nature of contrastive teaching methods that focus on the unique features of English absent in the other *background languages* that make up the learners' linguistic repertoire. Such an endeavour can raise the learners' awareness about the distinctive properties of the target language and therefore reduce the likelihood of cross-linguistic interference. Further studies are still required to attain a more sophisticated understanding of the mechanisms that underlie the interplay between French as an L2 and English as an L3 within the multilingual context of Algeria. Studying the intensity with which every category of error occurs through the quantification of data should be the next quest of research, since such an endeavour can assist in gaining a comprehensive conceptualisation of the phenomenon.

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