Languages in Contact

Error Analysis of Italian Childrens' Compositions in a Multilingual Context

by

Jacqueline Samperi Mangan

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

LANGUAGES IN CONTACT
ERROR ANALYSIS OF ITALIAN CHILDRENS' COMPOSITIONS
IN A MULTILINGUAL CONTEXT

Children of Italian immigrants in Montreal are in contact with many languages and kinds of speech. French and English are used publicly, formal Italian is studied in heritage classes, a dialect of the family's region of origin is used at home, and a kind of koiné is frequently used in interactions with other Italian immigrants. The contact of these languages produces various kinds of interferences. These lead a child to make errors when he tries to use the Standard Italian code. In this research, childrens' compositions are examined for errors which in turn are analysed and classified. The causes of these errois are investigated and statistics are presented to indicate the frequency of errors or the power of various causes.

An effort is made to show all the different errors and interferences that occur, and to discover a pattern of their causes. The data put forth might eventually serve as a base for further studies on the pedagogical prevention or correction of errors in the teaching of Standard Italian as adapted to the specific situation in Montreal.

Jacqueline Samperi-Mangan   Department of Italian

Master of Arts   McGill University

                                   Montreal, Canada

RESUME

LANGUES EN CONTACT
ANALYSE DES ERREURS RETROUVEES DANS LES COMPOSITIONS
D'ENFANTS ITALIENS DANS UN CONTEXTE MULTILINGUE

Les enfants d'immigrants italiens à Montréal, sont en contact avec plusieurs langues et a'itres parlers. L'emploi du français et de l'anglais est généralisé dans la vie publique. L'italien standard est enseigné dans les cours de langue d'origine, le dialecte de la région d'origine des parents est employé à la maison et enfin un type de koinè est fréquemment utilisé en présence d'autres immigrants italiens. Le contact de ces langues produit différents types d'interférences. Celles-ci provoquent des erreurs chez l'enfant. Dans ce travail de recherche, les compositions d'enfants sont étudiées et les erreurs, analysées et classées. On en examine les sources et des statistiques sont produites pour indiquer la fréquence et l'ampleur des différentes causes.

Un effort particulier est fait pour montrer toutes les possibilités d'erreurs et d'interférences et pour mettre à jour un modèle des sources d'erreurs. Les données recueillies pourraient éventuellement servir de base à des études complémentaires sur la prévention d'erreurs dans l'enseignement de l'italien standard adapté au milieu scolaire montréalais.

Jacqueline Samperi Mangan
Maîtrise en Art

Département d'Italien
Université McGill
Montréal, Québec

INTRODUCTION

This study analyses some errors of Italian childrens' compositions written in a multilingual context and examines the linguistic interferences that exist among three and more languages spoken by the children of Italian immigrants in the Montreal area. The Italian that these children and their families usually speak does not reflect the Standard Italian used in Italy for public purposes such as on television or radio. The Italian immigrants in Montreal are in contact with the French and the English languages as well as a variety of dialects from different regions of Italy. This results in the phenomenon of "languages in contact" as Weinreich defines it:

> "Two or more languages will be said to be in contact if they are used alternately by the same persons. The language using individuals are thus the locus of the contact."[1]

The contact of languages also occurs when two or more speakers with differing languages communicate. They will converse through a language that shares as much commonality as possible with the other language, and all parties will try to speak so as to be understood by the others. This is what happens in Montreal where Italian immigrants speak a language formed basically from the Standard Italian, with many French, English and dialect expressions in it. In Toronto, New York, or any other large centre with Italian immigrants, the language spoken among the immigrants has many English and dialect expressions. The reason these languages form and live is due to a very basic communication need among immigrants from various regions of

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1

Italy. The main language of the place (English, French, or whatever) adds a common denominator to some shared expressions from Italy.

In North America English generally remains integral while the immigrant tries to become bilingual or even trilingual, at least to the extent of comprehension by non-immigrants. This contact of languages gives rise to linguistic interferences. The degree of interference depends upon many factors, some of which are linguistic and some extra-linguistic, such as the person's commitment to one language or the other.

Numerous studies have been done in the field of language interferences but only a few concentrate on the particular situation in Montreal, where the majority of Italian immigrants live in a multilingual atmosphere created by the pre-eminence of both the French and English languages, as well as by a myriad of other languages. The preceding studies concentrated for the most part on bilingualism, whereas the present study concentrates on a condition of plurilinguism. To our knowledge only Labrie (1984) and Villata (1990) have focused on the particularity of Montreal's contact of Italian with French and English languages. Labrie studied:

> "Les comportements linguistiques de deux générations
> d'italophones de Montréal (pères et fils), observés dans deux
> domaines d'activité (au foyer et au travail), ... selon les combinaisons
> linguistiques concernées par le contact entre l'italien, le français et
> l'anglais."[2]

What Labrie found was that the Montreal Italophones are linguistically very flexible and adjust themselves easily to all linguistic situations. Villata spent many years observing the Italian language spoken in Montreal and recording

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[2] Normand Labrie, *La vitalité ethnolinguistique et les caractéristiques socio-psychologiques de l'individu vivant en milieu bilingue* (Québec: CIRB, 1984), p. i.

in particular the use of loanwords from English and/or from French used by Italian immigrants. For this research we especially draw information from three of his studies dealing with the languages spoken by children of Italian origin in Montreal:

1)   "Comportamento linguistico dei giovani montrealesi che hanno l'italiano come <langue du foyer>"

2)   "Trilinguismo dei giovani montrealesi di origine italiana"

3)   "Considération sur l'écologie linguistique de Montréal et son influence sur la socialisation des jeunes allophones".[3]

The primary aim of the present study is to analyse the written errors of children of Italian origin and to classify the interferences occurring as a result of the contact of Italian with dialects and the French and/or English language(s). We will also indicate the frequency of the errors so as to note those that are more common. Furthermore, an attempt will be made to point out the causes of the errors and find a possible pedagogical solution to break the pattern of common errors.

[3] Bruno Villata, *L'italiano a contatto con il francese e con l'inglese* (Montréal: Montfort & Villeroy Éditeurs, 1990).

CHAPTER 1

THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE IN MONTREAL

1.1. ITALIAN IMMIGRATION

Italian immigration to Canada had two major phases. The first took place between the years 1896 and 1925 when about 173,000 Italians arrived in Canada. The second phase of immigration extended from 1946 to 1975 when more than 430,000 Italians arrived.[4] The Canadian census of 1981 shows that of the 871,695 persons of Italian origin, 560,440 (64.3%) were settled in Ontario, and 174,735 (20.0%) of the population was in Quebec.[5] Most of these immigrants came after the Second World War and the Italians who came to Quebec settled principally in Montreal. Looking at the Census of Quebec for 1986 we see that the actual number of Italians in Quebec was 163,880.[6] According to the 1981 statistics, 95.6% of the Quebec population of Italian origin were living in the Montreal metropolitan area.[7]

Italians as well as other ethnic groups chose to live close to their co-nationals and thus formed areas in the city with strong ethnic influence.

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[4] C. Painchaud et R. Poulin, *Les Italiens au Québec* (Hull: Éditions Critiques/Asticou, 1988), p. 23.

[5] Recensement du Canada de 1981, "Originaires de l'Europe centrale et de l'Europe du sud, Collection Les communautés culturelles du Québec; 1," (Montréal: Éditions Fides, 1985), p. 138.

[6] Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère des Communautés culturelles et de l'Immigration, Direction des Études et de la Recherche, *Origine Ethnique: première données du recensement de 1986* , (Québec: n. p., mars 1988), p. 9.

[7] Ibid., p. 89.

These 'ghettos' permitted Italians to speak their own language, to find or establish stores selling Italian food, to live among friends with a shared culture. Naturally this implied a rapid and total integration of new Italian immigrants into their ethnic neighbourhoods, helped and guided by the "old" generation. Before 1950 Italian immigrants did assimilate to the Quebec French community, but since the post War demographic explosion of the 1950's and 1960's, the Italian community grew bigger and stronger and assimilation weakened. The Italian language became part of business and family life.[8] This indicates that when immigration was low, the assimilation to the French culture and language was more necessary and that when immigration was high, Italians did not need to assimilate to the French, because they felt secure in their own community. To help and keep the interests of this community, some Italian leaders became politicians. The first Italian municipal counsellor in Montreal was Alfredo Gagliardi in 1950.[9] Other familiar names on the political scene were and are John Ciaccia, William Cusano and Cosmo Maciocia, who became provincial deputies.

It was not only political leadership that helped the Italian community, but numerous associations grouped immigrants together in various ways. In 1980 Mingarelli counted about 185 Italian associations.[10]

For the purpose of this research it is important to mention two programs devoted to the teaching of Italian to children of Italian origin. One

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[8] B. Ramirez, "Immigration et rapports familiaux chez les Italiens du Québec," in *Quaderni Culturali*, vol. 2, num. 1, p. 23.

[9] G. Mingarelli, *Gli italiani di Montreal: note e profili* (n. p.: Centro Italiano Attività Commerciali e Artistiche, 1980), p. 177.

[10] Ibid., pp. 128-130.

is sponsored by the "Patronato Italo-Canadese di Assistenza agli Immigrati" (PICAI), which was founded in 1965 to help Italian immigrants and expanded in 1970 with the institutionalization of language courses (before 1970 these courses were offered by the parishes of the community). The PICAI offers Italian language courses to young Italo-Quebecers from ages 5 to 18. It also offers training courses and educative trips to Italy for teachers. The PICAI program is funded by the provincial and federal governments, the Italian Ministry of External Affaires, and tuition fees. It serves 3456 students as of December 1990 (175 in kindergarten, 1976 in elementary classes, and 1285 in junior high, corresponding to Italian 'medie'), teaching Italian language, culture, geography and history.[11] Since 1970 the subjects are being taught in 30 schools in the Montreal area with 195 classes. Courses run throughout the school year every Saturday morning from 9 am to 12 noon for approximately 80 hours. Classroom facilities are rented from boards of education. Studies began because of a need to mantain the Italian language and culture in Canada since many families still have relatives in Italy: "Les cours de langue sont nés d'un besoin réel, car on doit tenir compte des buts de la communauté qui veut perpétuer des liens avec le lieu d'origine de la famille et permettre aux enfants de communiquer avec les parents par l'intermédiaire de la langue italienne."[12] Some very significant changes involving parents, teachers, members of other associations and parishes have occurred recently in an attempt to improve this service.

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[11] Telephone interview with Aloisio Mulas, P.I.C.A.I. director, February 1991.

[12] Relazione della Dottoressa Carla Pesciatini (direttrice didattica presso il PICAI, documento dattiloscritto presso la direzione del PICAI, 14 ottobre 1979), p. 26.

The second program which offers Italian language courses is the Programme d'Enseignement des Langues d'Origine (PELO). The PELO project was launched by the "Ministère de l'Education du Québec" in the school year 1977-78 and serves the purpose of supporting cultural ethnicity through teaching the language of origin of various ethnic groups in Montreal. Children of Greek, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish parentage are all able to study the language and culture of their respective heritage. It is one way of showing that different communities are an integral part of Quebec's society.[13] The PELO, unlike the PICAI, functions throughout the week during regular school hours for about 35 minutes a day. It operates in schools where there is considerable concentration of ethnic children. These schools are often located in or close to the heart of the ethnic community.

1.2. LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE IN MONTREAL

To introduce the particular linguistic situation existing in Montreal, it is best to examine the basic parameters that characterize it. Sbrocchi explains:

"1) A differenza degli Stati Uniti il Canada è storicamente e ufficialmente un paese bilingue: inglese-francese. (Che poi il francese sia limitato al Quebec, a gran parte dell'Ontario, alle province atlantiche e ad alcune zone dell'Ovest, non importa).

2) Il Canada ha un'immigrazione recente da vari paesi dell'Europa e anche da alcuni del Centro America. Questi emigrati si sono stabiliti in diverse zone

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[13] L. Varagnolo, paper presented at the FILEF conference "Scuola e Nuova Società" and published in *Emigrazione FILEF*, (Montreal, June 12, 1980), p.40.

del paese dando ad esse delle caratteristiche particolari basate sulle loro tradizioni ivi trapiantate ma colorate e in parte trasformate dal continuo contatto con quelle di altri paesi o indigene. Pertanto, pur nel continuo ed incessante processo di assimilazione, hanno conservato in gran parte le proprie tradizioni culturali e linguistiche.

3) Da qualche anno il Governo federale persegue la politica del multiculturalismo. Cioè, il Governo ha riconosciuto l'importanza e la validità del retaggio socio-culturale portato dai vari gruppi di immigranti che formano il grande mosaico canadese e ne incoraggia il recupero, la sopravvivenza, e -per quanto possibile- anche lo sviluppo. Attua una politica di integrazione, ove per integrazione- dice il senatore P. Bosa- s'intende che l'individuo viene accettato per quello che è, per quello che ha, per quello che può dare, ma anche -come dice il ministro D. Collenette- perché è molto utile negli scambi economici o in relazioni commerciali."[14]

In Montreal there is a unique situation of multiculturalism. The French language holds a privileged position thanks to Bills 101 and 178, legislation that protects the existence of the French language in a vast English speaking country. So, even though Canada as a nation is officially bilingual, Provincial laws make French the official language of the Province of Quebec.

Notwithstanding these laws, English, the dominant but not majority language, holds a role of prestige and is diffused on radio, TV, schools, and universities. And many other languages are used in Montreal, too. These languages reflect the mosaic of cultures that exist in that city. Politically

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[14] Leonard Sbrocchi, "La lingua italiana in Canada," in *Il Veltro*, XXVIII, 1984, p. 36.

powerful, the larger ethnic groups mantain their culture and traditions in part through their language of origin. One such ethnic group is the 163,880 Italians[15] living in the Montreal area.

As we indicated previously, there were two major phases in the immigration of Italians to Canada and thus to Quebec. This factor has a certain influence on which of the official languages of Canada the Italians chose to adopt upon arrival. In 1930 the English and the French languages were chosen equally by Italian parents for their children as the school language. Later, the percentages changed dramatically. In the late 1960's 90% of Italian parents chose English as the school language. Factors relating to political events and economic growth influenced the choice of language. As one Italian immigrant related: "Nous avons quitté les amis, les parents et la patrie. Nous sommes venus au Canada de si loin pour améliorer notre sort et assurer l'avenir de nos enfants. Il serait tout simplement insensé de restreindre l'éventail des emplois éventuellement accessibles à nos enfants en les faisant instruire en français, puisque cette langue ne se parle qu'au Québec. L'anglais est la langue de l'Amérique du Nord."[16]

But now, after major political and social reactions in Quebec, French is assuming a powerful place. According to statistics done by Painchaud and Poulin:"La langue française est maintenant la langue la plus utilisée par les Italo-Québécois de Montréal dans les services publics (76,4%), dans les organismes (59,3%), à la banque (53%) et au travail (46,3%). La langue italienne est la plus utilisée dans le quartier (59,1%), avec les voisins (63%),

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[15] *Origine Ethnique*, op. cit., p. 9.

[16] J. Boissevain, "Les Italiens de Montréal. L'adaptation dans une société pluraliste," in *Commission royale d'enquête sur le bilinguisme et le biculturalisme*, (Ottawa: Étude num. 7, 1971), p. 38.

avec les commerçants (55,1%), avec les amis (78,9%) et à la maison (88,1%). La langue anglaise est la deuxième langue en importance au travail et dans les services publics. Autrement dit, l'Italo-Québécois doit maintenant, à cause des transformations qu'a connues le Québec depuis la 'Révolution tranquille', utiliser surtout la langue française dans les communications avec la société environnante."[17] A changing social environment, pressures to make a given language dominant, had an impact on the language spoken by Italian immigrants. The presence of the numerous dialects spoken by Italians and the influence of English and French has shaped a particular language, a koinè spoken only in Montreal and that Villata calls the "Italianese".[18] As Villata explains: "Già nel 1979 avevamo notato che a Montreal si era formata una lingua comune, diversa dall'italiano standard e dai dialetti, molto efficace per le comunicazioni tra italofoni provenienti da regioni diverse, quindi tra persone parlanti dialetti diversi. Il lessico di questa lingua che abbiamo chiamato **italianese** per distinguerla dall'**italiese** di Toronto, comprende numerose unità lessicali provenienti dal francese e dall'inglese "[19] This koiné, "the Italianese", is a confluence of at least three languages, French, English, and Italian (both standard and dialect) that emerged as Italians of one dialect tried to communicate with Italians of another. A "search" for

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[17] C. Painchaud et R. Poulin, op. cit., p. 147.

[18] Gianrenzo P. Clivio, "The Assimilation of English Loanwords in Italo-Canadian," in *The Second Lacus FORUM* (1975), ed. Reich. (Columbia, SC: Hornbeam Press, 1976), pp. 584-589.
Marcel Danesi, "L'interferenza lessicale nell'italiano parlato in Canada (Toronto)," in *Les langues néo-latines*, (1982:241), pp. 163-167.
Bruno Villata, "Osservazioni sul processo di assimilazione degli imprestiti rilevati nell'italiano parlato a Montreal," in *Studii si cercerati lingvistice*, (1981:32) pp. 647-649.

[19] Bruno Villata, 1990, p. 72.

common words gave rise to an interesting vocabulary remarkable for its multilingual basis.

In the 1960s up to the 1980s the English was predominant in the formal education of the children of Italian immigrants, because English was seen as a value for geographical mobility. In recent years the children of immigrants often attend French schools, but even there the students frequently speak English among themselves. Exposure to English comes from television (including programs originating in the United States), and from other sources such as movies and records. These children are exposed to standard Italian in the heritage classes taught through PICAI and/or PELO. They are also exposed to the dialect spoken at home by their parents, and to the Italianese spoken in the community and through local networks.

1.3. CHILDREN AND THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE

In the Italian language classes taught in Quebec we find some children of Italian origin who already know standard Italian; others who have never studied standard Italian and speak a dialect at home. There are also French Canadian students and students of other origins who learn Italian, but the vast majority of students who take Italian courses are of Italian origin.

We have seen that Italo-Canadian children are exposed to a variety of languages in Quebec: French and/or English at the public school; French and/or English among friends; dialect of their origin region at home with parents or relatives; standard Italian at the PICAI and/or the PELO and, very significantly, the "Italianese".

They may vary their language according to the circumstances. In each case, the choice of one language over the others is very much related to to the

semantical content of their conversations. As Villata points out, a person will associate one language to a certain semantical area and the other language to another semantical area. From Villata's various studies we notice that the Italian language is frequently used in the semantical group of the "parts of the body" and in the "house and furniture" as well as the "kitchen". The French language is commonly used for semantical areas as the "city", "means of transportation" and "jobs and professions". This phenomenon is explained by Villata: "Questo fenomeno, all'apparenza piuttosto strano, si spiega con il fatto che l'italiano è più forte nei campi semantici legati al ruolo di figlio e al dominio casa, cioè si addice a situazioni e a ruoli in cui di solito il giovane italo-montrealese usa l'italiano, mentre il francese prevale sull'italiano in quei centri d'interesse attinenti ai ruoli in cui solitamente il giovane comunica in questa lingua."[20]

This phenomenon might explain why, in our research, some words are related to the French and why some others are borrowed by the English or the home-dialect.

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[20] Ibid., p. 74.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH RETROSPECTIVE

2. 1. ERROR ANALYSIS

One branch of applied linguistics is called "error analysis". This branch has two fundamental functions. The first function is theoretical and the second is practical.

The theoretical aspect of error analysis, following Corder's theories, involves an investigation of the learning process of a language. To understand better the psychological dynamics that are continuously at work during the learning of a language, an observer must analyze each step of the learning process and evaluate whether the pedagogy is appropriate to the student.

The practical aspect of error analysis has the function of guiding the student to a better process of learning, and the teacher to a more efficient process of teaching.

The cataloguing of errors is a traditional activity of teachers. Every teacher recognizes that students' errors tend to be repetitive and follow established patterns. Some teachers even have a list of the most frequently recurring errors, and are well prepared to correct them. But this is too subjective in that its effectiveness depends on the teacher's competence and interest. Error Analysis takes cataloguing to a new and more effective level. It seeks not only to understand the difficulties students have, but the nature of and reason for these difficulties. In fact only when we know why an error was made, can we begin to find an adequate pedagogical response to the error.

Usually it is necessary to know the first language (L1) and to compare it to the second language (L2), the so called "target language". In this way it is possible to anticipate "transfer" errors or errors of analogy.

The error problem consists in the fact that the student is engaged in the discovery of the system or the code of the new language and, even if subconsciously, forms hypotheses of grammatical rules for the new language. The student bases these on all the information at his disposal, from the teacher, from the text, or from what he hears in conversations. These hypotheses of how the new language works vary depending on the information the student receives. Therefore the hypotheses change consequent to new input. The hypotheses can be wrong or incomplete causing the student to make errors. As soon as the student is corrected by the teacher, he himself will reformulate his set of hypotheses and try again. If a modified utterance still proves not to be correct, the student further reformulates his hypotheses, again taking into consideration all the information at his disposal. Each new hypotheses comes closer to the "target language". From this process of trial and error it is possible to see how the student forms a grammar with its own laws that at times do not correspond to the laws of the "target language". This language that the student is forming while continuously reformulating grammatical rules is a language in a process that starts with the L1 and ends with the L2 or "target language".

This particular unstable system is called "interlanguage" (IL). The study of interlanguage is the study of the language systems of language learners. The linguists are interested in identifying and understanding this interlanguage at all its transformational phases. Linguists affirm that at each phase of the interlanguage there is an absolute and complete system of grammar or codes. As Corder says: "The learner's language at any point in

14

his career is systematic and potentially functional."[21] This indicates that the IL is *per se* a real language, even if different from both L1 and the target language. The student is able to communicate through the interlanguage with increasing effectiveness during the learning process.

The learning of a second language is characterized by the presence of this interlanguage, the approximating code that typically emerges in the first stages of the learning process. This code is further characterized by systematic errors. There are some unconscious and automatic aberrations that are imputable to linguistic interferences from L1. Psychological mechanisms such as the simplification of complex structures and the generalisation by analogy are also partly accountable for this code. There is therefore a linear process where the student goes from the L1, which he knows already, through the IL to arrive to the target language, L2.

In our case, the process is far more complicated than in the theory. As Danesi explains: "Nel caso del discente italo-canadese non si tratta di un processo di questo tipo poiché la lingua oggetto è una variante di L1; perciò non si tratta di imparare una lingua 'straniera' ma piuttosto un 'dialetto' - quello standardizzato o d'uso medio- della lingua che il discente già sa. In termini psicolinguistici si tratta di raggiungere uno stato di bilinguismo 'coordinato' o 'separato' da una fase anteriore di bilinguismo 'composto'"[22].

The complexity of the interlanguage in the present research, is due to the great number of interferences coming from four linguistic sources: English, French, the dialect of origin and the koinè of Italo-Montrealers.

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[21] Pit Corder, *Error Analysis and Interlanguage* (Oxford: Oxford U Press, 1981), p. 53.

[22] Marcel Danesi, *Tecniche di insegnamento dell'italiano a livello primario in Canada* (Roma: Veltro Editrice, 1984), p. 65.

Interferences that come from the English and French sources are consistently strong because the student has an active competence in these languages which are learned in a formal setting at school, are used with friends and absorbed from television. There is greater variability in the case of the dialect of origin and the koinè Italo-Montrealese. Here the strength of the interference is closely related to generational and family tradition factors.

2.2. <u>TRANSFER</u> <u>AND</u> <u>INTERFERENCE</u>

Edgar Radtke says that transfer and interference are phenomena that must be understood in the teaching of foreign languages. The characteristics of transfer and interference are listed by Radtke as follows:

" 1) In una situazione data di contatto linguistico una delle due lingue funge da madrelingua (L1), l'altra da lingua straniera (L2), in questa situazione L1 > L2 compare più frequentemente di L2 > L1.

2) Il passaggio di abitudini proprie della madrelingua nella lingua di apprendimento avviene consapevolmente e inconsapevolmente (Lado 1971, p. 299). Il dato di fatto della consapevolizzazione delle interferenze implica un modo linguistico di procedere, che vada al di là dei meri criteri descrittivi e faccia ricorso prevalentemente ad aspetti pragmatici e di psicologia dell'apprendimento. E' in questo ambito che io vedo collocarsi la competenza specifica della linguistica degli errori, affinché essa non derivi i propri sussidi di apprendimento dalle analisi strutturaliste, ma si imposti sull'interdisciplinarietà di linguistica, pedagogia e psicologia dell'apprendimento.

3) La valutazione di un transfer L1 > L2 dipende dalla realizzazione della norma o dall'infrazione della norma del processo linguistico: la

caratterizzazione dell'interferenza come "transfer negativo" (Bausch 1973, p. 161 e molti altri ancora) indica con evidenza che la (in)osservanza della norma diventa parametro della ricerca sull'interferenza. A questo punto non meraviglia neppure più che al transfer (positivo) venga dedicato solo pochissimo spazio, tanto più che esso spesso non è documentabile e la realizzazione della norma svela solo in casi rarissimi una influenza della madrelingua. É quindi comprensibile che la ricerca sul transfer si collochi sempre come ricerca sull'interferenza, anche se l'elevata considerazione per i possibili transfer (positivi) è da considerare nell'insegnamento delle lingue straniere un elemento consolidante del potenziamento della motivazione e dell'impostazione di successi dell'apprendimento. In questo senso si può ravvisare nel transfer una capacità di influenzare positivamente l'apprendimento."[23]

Transfer and interference relate generally only to the effect of L1 on L2 or L2 on L3. But Bernard Py has shown that there are effects of L2 on L1 as well.[24] In fact in his paper 'Native Language Attrition amongst Migrant Workers', a study on Spanish migrants working in Switzerland, Py gives a unified model on difficulties that migrants experience in communicating in their native language. These are his descriptions:

> "(a) L1 competence is in disequilibrium: it is submitted to unusual levels of stress and a result can only be described in dynamic terms;

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[23] Edgar Radtke, "Il problema del transfer e dell'interferenza nell'insegnamento delle lingue straniere," in *Linguistica Contrastiva*, (Roma: Bulzoni, 1982), pp. 112-113.

[24] Bernard Py, "Native Language Attribution amongst Migrant Workers: Towards an Extension of the Concept of Interlanguage," in *Crosslinguistic Influence in Second Language Acquisition*, (New York: Pergamon Press, 1986), pp. 163-172.

(b) L1 competence contains numerous, frequent and varied deviations from the official norm-these are only partially institutionalized in the form of socially marked variants;

(c) L1 habits become influenced by the L2 under the variable influence of what has here been called 'the interpretive function';

(d) the L1 system only accounts for a sing¹ aspect of the speaker's speech habits and thus coexis ith an (interim) L2 system and a bilingual competence, the most striking characteristics of which is its ability to combine two linguistic repertoires within one and the same communicative act."[25]

Such research shows how L2 can influence changes in the L1 even if L1 is the mother tongue of these Spanish workers. This explains the phenomenon of the 'Italianese' in Montreal, where the L2 (in this case: English and/or French) interferes with L1, the dialect of origin of the Italian individual living in Montreal. When Py expands on his research, it is striking to notice how closely his findings reflect the koinè phenomenon of the Italian community in Montreal. He says: "The contraction in the range of communicative functions and contexts in which they [Spanish immigrants in Switzerland] operate is linked to the establishment in the host country of a form of diglossia which goes hand in hand with the consolidation of the migrant population and access to an original sociocultural identity. Even if the native language fulfils most of the central communicative functions for first-generation migrants, certain verbal activities become no less the prerogative of the host language. This would be the case, for instance, with regard to the media ..., certain administrative procedures, or discussions relating to school, let alone the professional environment. For second-

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[25] Ibid., p.171.

18

generation migrants the host language fulfils, often exclusively, a vast array of central functions which usually group together extra-familial activities ..., and even some of the activities within the family (relations with brothers and sisters). These functional divisions not only entail a quantitative diminution in the use of the native language, but probably also an impoverishment in the verbal repertoire linked to a reduction in the variety of speech acts and discourse types realized through the native language."[26]

The interpretation of the native language via the host language is also presented in the studies of Villata. He looks at the effect on the Italian spoken in Montreal in its encounter with French and English. Villata notices some 'Bedürfnisslehnwörter' taken from the host languages and integrated into the L1, the Italian. Here is one of many examples: "...**Deliverazione**, ce dernier du français 'livraison' et de l'anglais 'delivery', indiquent donc deux actions qui ne sont pas très communes en Italie ... . Du point de vue strictement linguistique il faut encore remarquer la singularité de l'unité lexicale **deliverazione** qui semble dérivée de l'union de -delivery- avec -livraison-."[27]

Another similarity between Py's results and Villata's findings on Montreal's most recent generation of Italians is the childrens' use of the L2 among brothers and sisters, and in all the extra-familial activities: "Les résultats des deux enquêtes démontrent également que ces jeunes s'expriment surtout en anglais avec leurs frères/soeurs et avec leurs amis et que l'emploi de l'italien dans ce genre d'interaction descend à des pourcentages très bas."[28]

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26 Ibid., p. 166.

27 Bruno Villata, *L'italiano a contatto con il francese e con l'inglese* (Montréal: Montfort & Villeroy Éditeurs, 1990), p. 27.

28 Bruno Villata, op. cit., p. 136.

As is indicated above, transfers from various sources other than L1 are additional influences on interlanguage. In the course of the present research transfers will be visible from French, from English, from the dialect of origin, from Italianese expressions, and in some rare cases even from Spanish.

It is not always easy to determine the interlanguage of each student, indeed without a direct analysis it is virtually impossible. But we can identify the elements pertaining to the codes that belong to L1 or L2 and L3 from the errors found in compositions used in this research.

By analysing these elements it is possible to find out the degree of influence from English, French and the dialect of origin on these Montreal children, and maybe find a pedagogical solution to some of the interferences. We say 'some of the interferences', because linguists like Dulay and Burt as well as others, believe that some transfers are necessary for the establishment of the new grammar rules of the target language. They believe in universal orders of development which, they maintain, explain the fact that second language learners with differing language backgrounds follow similar developmental paths.[29]

In the teaching of a foreign language, the ordinary hypothesis is that the student speaks only one language in which he possesses a native competence, while the language that is studied is totally alien to his experience as a monolingual person. This is not our particular case. In the teaching of Italian in Canada, the situation bears a series of linguistic problems since, with very few exceptions, the teaching is geared towards

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[29] Dulay, Burt and Krashen, *Language Two* (Oxford: Oxford U Press, 1982).

multilingual children of Italian immigrants. These children already speak more than one language and have native competence in a language that is a variant of the target language. Here is how Danesi sees it: "Quindi, sia dal punto di vista psicologico che da quello linguistico, l'insegnamento dell'italiano nelle scuole primarie canadesi costituisce un caso didattico particolarmente difficoltoso."[30]

2.3. CROSSLINGUISTIC INFLUENCE

More recent European-based research in second language acquisition[31] has "focused on the analysis of interlanguage (IL) as an unknown system of representation and communication, and as an activity of construction of

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[30] Marcel Danesi, *Tecniche di insegnamento dell'italiano a livello primario in Canada* (Roma: Veltro Editrice, 1984), p. 62.

[31] Meisel, "Reference to past events and actions in the development of natural second language acquisition," Paper presented at the First Eunam Workshop on Crosslinguistic SLA Research (Göhrde, 1982);
   von Stutterheim, "Temporality in learner varieties," Paper presented at the First Eunam Workshop on Crosslinguistic SLA Research (Göhrde, 1982);
   Dittmar, "Ich fertig arbeite, nicht mehr spreche Deutsch: Semantische Eigenschaften Pidginisierter Lernervarietäten des Deutschen", *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik*, 45 (1982), pp. 132-141;
   C. Noyau, "The expression of temporality: a longitudinal study," Paper presented at the Second Eunam Workshop on Crosslinguistic SLA Research (Göhrde, 1982);
   Anne Trévise, "Some remarks on the expression of temporality in the speech of a Spanish-speaking adult acquiring French in a natural setting," Paper presented at the Second Eunam Workshop on Crosslinguistic SLA Research (Göhrde, 1982);
   T. Huebner, "Order of acquisition vs. dynamic paradigm: a comparison of method in interlanguage research," in *TESOL Quarterly*, 13, 1, 1979, pp. 78-95;
   T. Huebner, "The dynamics of an interlanguage," Paper presented at the Second Eunam Workshop on Cross-Linguistic SLA Research (Göhrde, 1982);
   R. Dietrich, "Bestimmtheit und Unbestimmtheit im Deutschen eines türkischen Arbeiters: eine Hypothese," Paper presented at the International Workshop: Transfer in Production (Kassel, 1982).

meaning by the speaker and reconstruction by the hearer. The traditional two-fold contrastive analysis (IL/L1 and IL/L2) in terms of quantification of the presence or absence of specific morphosyntactic features tend now to be replaced by more 'functional' as well as more crosslinguistic approaches dealing with the construction and use of such notions as reference to time, place and people, determination, modality, denial, etc."[32] The term: 'crosslinguistic influence' (CLI) as Sharwood Smith and Kellerman call it, is "theory-neutral, allowing one to subsume under one heading such phenomena as 'transfer', 'interference', 'avoidance', 'borrowing', and L2-related aspects of language loss and thus permitting discussion of the similarities and differences between these phenomena".[33]

2.4. CANADA'S PERSPECTIVE

It seems that the linguistic phenomenon of learning a language in a multilingual context is more complex than any other examined until now in various countries by linguists. The Montreal situation presents a multitude of problems far greater than those presented by the linguistic situations in Toronto, in Australia, in the United States or even Europe. This is why we cannot make direct comparisons between the few studies done on Montreal's particularity with those done elsewhere. Most research is based on a monolingual situation and not on a bilingual or multilingual situation as is

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[32] Anne Trévise, "Is it transferable, topicalization?," in *Crosslinguistic Influence in Second Language Acquisition* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1986), p. 186.

[33] Michael Sharwood Smith and Eric Kellerman, eds. *Crosslinguistic influence in second language acquisition: an introduction* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1986), p. 1.

22

the case in Montreal. Research done in Europe is characterized by socio-linguistic concerns that make it different from research done in North America and Australia. The studies done in Switzerland and in Belgium,[34] for example, did focus on multilinguism, but the socio-linguistic characteristics of European countries present quite a different scene.[35] The objective of keeping the language of origin, or more precisely of encouraging the immigrants to maintain their language of origin, is to preserve the possibility of sending these immigrants back to their countries as soon as the need for their services has expired. The whole pedagogical system is therefore different from what can be found in countries with permanent immigration status, like the United States, Australia, and Canada. But under this social aspect, there is a difference between Canada and countries such as the USA and Australia. Canada adopts a different policy vis-a-vis ethnic groups than do the other countries. What they call in the States "the melting pot", that phenomenon of jelling all the cultures into one large and unique culture with one language only, the American-English, does not happen in Canada. The latter adopts the system called "ethnic mosaic"[36], so called because the integration of various cultures ideally does not destroy them. Lately, however, the province of Quebec is trying some kind of French "melting pot" that appears to be closer to the USA model than to the Canadian national policy on multiculturalism. Still, this particular system of "ethnic mosaic"

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[34] Ettore Gelpi, "Una sfida all'educazione permanente," in La lingua degli emigrati, (Firenze: Guaraldi Editore, 1977), pp. 31-42.

[35] Kenneth McRae, Conflict and Compromise in Multilingual Societies: Switzerland (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier U Press, 1983), pp. 147-172.

[36] Multiculturalism Directorate, 1983.

presents a new and unique linguistic perspective with some disadvantage in that it prevents the creation of a culturally homogeneous social tissue, but with advantages of great importance that minimize the cultural shock of immigrants. Under the socio-linguistic aspect, then, the advantages offered in Montreal are numerous and encourage the keeping of the language of origin.

To our knowledge there is only one major contributor dealing in particular with the Italian spoken in Montreal. Bruno Villata has researched this area over a number of years and has written regularly of his findings. And it is with the results of his research that we might compare the findings of our research, since his findings are the closest related to this present study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

3.1. VARIABLES

In order to study the interferences acting on the target language of children of Italian immigrants and to observe to what degree the languages in contact interact among themselves, the compositions of a number of Italian origin children studying Standard Italian in Montreal were examined. The socio-environmental variables correlated to the gathering of the data were: age, grade, and schools of Italian immigrant children living in Montreal. These variables were selected according to the criteria listed below.

3.1.1. SUBJECTS

Data is collected from 50 compositions, 25 of the compositions are from children learning Italian in PICAI courses and the other 25 from children learning Italian in PELO courses.

The subjects were chosen as representative of as many classes as possible and from different schools. The only criterion for the subjects was that they be born in Italian immigrant families. They had to be of Italian origin, even though they might not speak Italian. The purpose for this was not only to concentrate the possibility of interferences to fewer sources (French, English, Italian dialect and the Italianese), but also to have a

homogeneous group of subjects representing children of the Italian community.

We did not find classification of subjects according to sex in any way relevant. For the research we have compositions from 34 girls and 16 boys.

To summarize, the subjects were selected according to their Italian origin, age, and to schools in quarters of the city to better represent a homogeneous group of Italian heritage.

3.1.2. GRADE AND AGE

The "fifth" grade was considered the most appropriate for the data collection. Fifth graders are old enough to be exposed to written work and to be able to express themselves in writing in their Standard Italian classes, and yet are young enough not to have mastered the language completely. The fifth grade child's knowledge represents for us the middle phase of the process of acquiring the language of origin. This middle phase gives us the possibility of revealing the interlanguage used by the child. It is the result of a struggle to reach the new language while still using the grammatical rules of the known languages as points of reference. Since the process of learning a new language is to discover the grammar of an unknown language by using and rearranging the grammatical rules of the known languages, we can assume that some of the rules known by the child will surface in the child's composition. Therefore, the interferences from the known languages will reveal to us parts of the child's interlanguage and the psycholinguistic phenomena that appear to happen in these children in their process of learning Standard Italian.

The age of the children is also relevant as a criterion of selection. Fifth grade children range between 10 and 12 years old, depending on what age they were when they started the first grade and if they had to repeat a year of school.

The "optimal age" to learn a foreign language has been one of the most controversial issues in second language research. One popular belief is the notion that it is better to learn a second language earlier than later. In recent years, the claim that younger students will always outperform older students in second language acquisition has been disputed.

The arguments for an early optimum are essentially the following:

"1. Neurological reasons, notably those of Penfield and Roberts.

2. Psychological reasons: young children cannot and need not to rely on reading and writing. They retain and repeat audio-orally. Their imitative ability seems to bebetter than later in life."[37]

According to the prediction of Penfield and Roberts, the theoretical learning ability curve space is: "100 percent learning capacity, between 4 and 8. It starts decreasing around the age of 9 to 12 and levels out around puberty to, let us say, 50 percent of the maximum capacity as a reasonable guess."[38] Separate testing of different second language abilities among the same subjects has enabled us to see that fidelity in pronunciation of an L2 is acquired before puberty. "Carroll (1963) suggests that the ability to acquire a native like accent

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[37] M. R. Donoghue, "A rationale for FLES," in *French Review* (1964), p. 38.

[38] Lars H. Ekstrand, "Age and Length of Residence as Variables Related to the Adjustment of Migrant Children, with Special Reference to Second Language Learning," in *Child-Adult Differences in Second Language Acquisition* (Series on Issues in Second Language Research, Newbury House Publ. and Rowley, Rowley, 1982), p. 124.

deteriorates toward puberty. ... Stevens (1972) considers age to be the most important among a number of causes for variations in pronunciation proficiency ... ".[39] Therefore children have a pre-puberty biological predisposition which enables them to achieve fidelity in pronunciation.

The arguments for a late optimum are the following: Adults and older children learn faster, because they grasp the structure of the language and they understand it better. Adults have already learned a language, compared to children that make the effort to learn their first language, and this makes the task of learning a second one easier.[40] Ervin-Tripp has also reported that older children learned number, gender, and syntax more rapidly than younger children.[41]

According to Krashen, Scarcella and Long, three generalizations concerning the age in second language acquisition are consistent throughout the literature: "1. Adults proceed through early stages of syntactic and morphological development faster than children ... , 2. Older children acquire faster than younger children ... , 3. Acquirers who begin natural exposure to second languages during childhood generally achieve higher second language proficiency than those beginning as adults."[42] Therefore, older age is better for rate of acquisition, and younger is better in the long run.

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[39] Ibid., pp. 124-125.

[40] S. Ervin-Tripp, "Is second language learning like the first?," in TESOL Quarterly (1974:8), pp. 111-127.

[41] Ibid., pp. 111-127.

[42] Krashen, Scarcella and Long, "Age, Rate, and Eventual Attainment in Second Language Acquisition," in Child-Adult Differences in Second Language Acquisition (Series on Issues in Second Language Research, Newbury House Publ. and Rowley, Rowley, 1982), p. 161.

In conclusion, we find that the group of 10-12 year old children is adequate to the purpose of this research. The children are old enough to avoid many L1 difficulties and can concentrate freely in the learning of Standard Italian. They also already have four years of classroom practice in Standard Italian, which helps them to achieve high second language proficiency.

Even though in this research the error analysis is based on written compositions, some phonological phenomena "transpire" through the written works, and herein lies one of the rationales for our approach. The children are not old enough to be prevented from acquiring a phonology faithful to the target language, yet are not too young to understand well the syntax, the morphology and the stylistics of the Standard Italian.

3.1.3. SCHOOLS

The PICAI and the PELO were mentioned earlier. These are the only two existing programs offering Italian courses to children. Both are governmentally recognized public systems in the Province of Quebec. Both were chosen as sources of material for research.

Although these programs differ in how time is scheduled for their classes, the weekly amount of time spent teaching Standard Italian is the same and the length of the school year is almost the same. The PELO has a slightly longer school year than the PICAI.

The qualifications required from the teachers are also more or less the same, but teachers from PELO are strongly advised to attend pedagogical seminars to maintain their teaching position. The PICAI teachers are offered a

29

variety of seminars, but only interested and willing teachers attend, and the others do not risk losing their teaching position.

3.2. DATA COLLECTION

In order to collect data for this research, written compositions and questionnaires were requested from fifth grade children. What follows are the criteria for compositions and questionnaires.

3.2.1. COMPOSITIONS

Letters and questionnaires were sent to 25 schools having fifth grade classes. We asked the teachers to have the children fill in the questionnaires and to write a one page composition on a topic chosen by the teacher, or even better, on a topic chosen by the student. We wanted to have as many diversified compositions as possible so as to have a wide range of vocabulary and expressions. We also wanted the child to feel free to express himself on a subject with which he is most confident; to find in these compositions an amount of "natural" expressions. The assumption was that the more naturally the child would express himself, the more genuine would be the composition in reflecting the speech of the child. Therefore, there should be few, if any, forced expressions. Furthermore, the compositions had to be returned uncorrected to us, and to avoid parental help, they had to be written in class. Time was not a criteria, so that it did not matter if the child needed one hour or two to write his composition. (For examples of compositions, see Appendix II).

The compositions accompanied by the completed questionnaires were 97, of which 41 came from the PICAI and 56 from the PELO. We also received 82 questionnaires without the compositions, and 19 compositions without the questionnaire. (This brought us to believe that some teachers did not carefully read the instructions.) Having discarded these incomplete sets, the analysis of the errors began. We soon noticed that the number of errors in each composition easily reached 50. Because of the unexpected quantity of errors found in the first analysed compositions, the number of compositions has been limited to 25 from the PICAI and 25 from the PELO. A total of 50 compositions was analysed with 2439 total errors. The equal amount was decided in the event a comparison was required between the PICAI and the PELO. For the purpose of variation, the selection of the 50 compositions covered as many classes as possible. The 25 compositions of the PICAI were from 8 schools and the 25 compositions of the PELO were from 5 schools. We also chose compositions of various themes to prevent a dominance of vocabulary or tense. Only one composition was discarded because the writer had mentioned in the questionnaire that she was not of Italian origin and it was her first year of Italian class. This composition was substituted by another.

To conclude, it is relevant that the number of compositions from the two programs is equal and that various classes from different schools and consequently different parts of the city are represented. The themes of the compositions are as diversified as possible to allow a vast range of expression.

3.2.2. QUESTIONNAIRES

A questionnaire was given to each subject in order to collect sociological and linguistic information concerning the child.

The questionnaire was given in Standard Italian by the teacher to the students. The teacher was instructed to help the students answer the questions pertaining to family, friends, and their linguistic background (see Appendix I).

From the questionnaire we have information about the child and his family. We know that all the fathers of these subjects were born in Italy, they are therefore first generation immigrants. Most children however were born in Montreal. Four children wrote that they were born in Canada, two wrote "Lachine" (near Montreal), and one child was born in New York. We know that 44 children have some relatives still living in Italy, therefore we could speculate that they communicate with them in one common language that could be the dialect of origin or a regional Italian, similar to the Standard Italian.

The questions are principally geared to give us the linguistic background of the child: for example, whether the child already speaks a dialect or even Standard Italian; to whom and how often he speaks his languages. The questionnaires help us understand the family linguistic situation too. In fact the questionnaires show that among the subjects there are 28 children who know English and speak it as a first language; 7 children speak French as a first language; and 15 children speak the two languages, French and English. What is amazing to note is that 21 of the parents of the English speaking children speak French, therefore it seems that French is more used by the parents than the children.

What also appears in the questionnaire is whether the child reads Standard Italian regularly at home. This would influence his written work in school. We discovered that 27 children read Standard Italian books and comics at home. Some questions are about the Italian relatives'

understanding of the child's Standard Italian or dialect when the child speaks to them on the phone or visits them in Italy. The above mentioned questions also give us some insight on lexical interferences in the speech of the child, as for example the following questions: "Mentre parli in italiano ti capita di usare delle parole che sai che non sono italiane?", "Usi molte parole in inglese o francese quando parli in italiano?" (see Appendix I). Does the child realize the use of non-Italian words when he speaks Italian? The linguistic background of both the child and his family is therefore visible through the questionnaire.

These questions seem to be many, but each helps in the error analysis in a different way. When analysing errors, uncertainties of interpretation occasionally arise. The more we know of the child's background, the more likely we are to make an accurate interpretation. For example: if the child does not speak any Italian or dialect at home, we can hardly argue that the ending of the word "un anziane" is an interference from the dialect (finale indistinta), because the background shows us that it is unlikely. Therefore the error will be analysed differently; probably as a morphological error due to distraction.

One other purpose of the questionnaire is the possibility of confronting statistics of the errors with statistics of the questionnaire. This means that, for example, we can relate the number of French interferences with the number of children speaking French at home and in school, or see if the interferences are independent from the mother tongue.

To conclude, the questionnaires have a function of validating the data resulting from the compositions and giving us valuable information on the writers of the compositions. They enable us also to prepare further statistical comparisons.

3.3. ANALYSIS OF DATA

The analysis of the collected data was the major work of this research. What the analysis ultimately has to show is the psycholinguistic dynamic of the languages in contact and of the teaching-learning process. Does the interference from one language on the other show that the error is done because of the inadequacy of teaching methods, or that the error is done because of a universal learning strategy? If indeed the error appears as the result of a strategy, then we know that it is part of the interlanguage, and therefore a 'necessary' error that the learner makes in order to investigate the system of the target language. If instead we don't find any pattern in the errors, then we might think that the child did not yet acquire the rule, or an inadequacy of teaching has occured. If so, we could compare the two organisations (PICAI and PELO) to see any differences in their teaching methods.

The steps in the analysis of the data for this research are four. The first step points out the error and what makes it an error; the second step is the interpretation of the genesis of the error; the third step is the attribution of the error to the linguistical axes; and the fourth step is the distribution of the error in grammatical categories.

3.3.1. ERROR DESCRIPTION

In the error analysis process the first thing to do is single out errors. To detect an error Corder suggests a comparison between the actual utterance and

34

"what a native speaker would have said to express that meaning".[43] For the definition of errors we considered all the lapses, mistakes, slips of the pen, and errors that do not fit into the Standard Italian of general use (l'italiano di "uso medio").[44] The "italiano d'uso medio" as Sabatini presents it, consists of the Standard Italian used by everybody throughout Italy for general everyday use. Since Sabatini suggests that this Italian "d'uso medio" is the language that is actually spoken in Italy, he also suggests that this language be used as the model of teaching Standard Italian abroad.

It is understood though that this error analysis depends on our personal interpretation of what the children were trying to express. This means that the description of the errors is directly influenced by our interpretation of what the children meant to say, and other researchers could occasionally give a different description to the same errors.

3.3.2. ERROR INTERPRETATION

The interpretation of the genesis of the error is the step where most of the personal interpretation comes into account. Nevertheless, an attempt to assign the most credible cause to the error and maintain a level of consistency throughout the interpretations was made.

Errors and mistakes are formed under many circumstances. Our question is: Which factors can explain the errors? What are the psycholinguistic mechanisms that generate errors?

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[43] Pit Corder, op. cit., p. 37

[44] Francesco Sabatini, "L'italiano 'di uso medio': un punto di riferimento per l'insegnamento dell'italiano all'estero," in *La cooperazione culturale: la lingua italiana in Canada*, (Roma: Il Veltro, 1984), pp. 13-19.

In considering the languages of our subjects (French, English, dialect and the koinè), the level of grammar the subjects would be exposed to, the Standard Italian taught to them, and their level of stylistics, the causes are differentiated among: distraction, ignorance, and interference.

We classified a deviation from Standard Italian as interference every time we were able to establish an association between the deviant behaviour and one of the linguistic codes, different from Standard Italian, that are present in the child's mind. Thus we may have interferences from a foreign code, like English or French, but we may also have interferences from the child's real mother tongue, the dialect spoken in his/her immediate surroundings. Some errors may be common among Italian speakers but belong to a "register" of Italian that is not recognized as Standard, such as slang or colloquial Italian. In certain cases, errors are generated by the inappropriate application of rules pertaining to Standard Italian (internal interferences), or by the inappropriate application of rules that pertain to the process of transposing oral utterances into a written text (orthographical interferences). We used the following subdivisions:

1) Interference from a foreign code:

- interference from the French (written and/or oral)

- interference from the English (written and/or oral)

- interference from either French or English

2) Interference from the mother tongue:

- interference from the dialect

- interference of grammatical rules (generalisation, overregularisation, internal interference of Standard Italian)

- interference from 'slang' Italian

- interference from 'colloquial' Italian

36

- interference from 'koiné': taken in consideration only

in lexical production (the code is not clear to us,

therefore we base ourselves on Villata's lexical findings)[45]

3) Interference from the rules that govern the transition from an oral

to a written utterance (orthography).

Since one of the assumptions present when we began this research was
that interferences from all the languages to which the child was exposed
impacted the proper use of Italian, it is natural that the error interpretation is
crucial to the definition of the interferences encountered. Meanwhile, all the
other errors are more or less interpreted as 'ignorance' or distraction'. As we
will see later in the examples, the interpretation of interferences is somehow
self-evident; the interpretation of the other errors is less obvious.

Errors of 'distraction' are all the utterances that cannot be explained
other than by a distraction of the child. A 'slip of the pen', as some linguists
refer to it. Most of them might even be considered as mistakes and not as
errors, but since we do not make the distinction between them, they are
considered as 'distraction errors'.

We define as errors of 'ignorance' all the utterances from which we
could infer that the child does not know the rule(s) that govern the
production of a correct utterance, be it in the order of grammar, lexis, syntax,
etc. Sometimes we were in doubt whether a certain deviant utterance was
produced because the child did not know the rule (ignorance) or because,
knowing the rule, he simply did not apply it (distraction). We decided to
classify the error as distraction if at least once in the composition he produced

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[45] Bruno Villata, op. cit., pp. 169-181.

the same utterance in a correct way. If an error that would normally be considered as a distraction (e.g. the lack of accent on è third person of the present singular of verb *essere*, or the use of a lower case letter after a period) was repeated throughout the whole composition, we defined it as an ignorance error. However, as it is often inconceivable that a particular rule was not covered in the teaching of Italian, we attributed certain errors to "distraction" even if they were repeated throughout the composition.

3.3.3. ERROR ATTRIBUTION

After the description of the error and its interpretation, there is its attribution to one of the two linguistic axes: the **syntagmatic axis** or the **paradigmatic axis**. A taxeme or syntagma could be explained as any string of units which together form a complex and larger unit, e.g. any arrangement of units in a syntactic construction such as "under the table". A syntagmatic error is therefore, an erroneous "horizontal" sequence of linguistic elements forming a distortion in the linear sequence(s). A paradigm is the so called list of all the possible forms that may fill a case in a syntagmatic string (e.g. the various inflected forms of a declinable word). A paradigmatic error is therefore the erroneous substitution of a form for another, the two being in "vertical" relationship in that they occupy the same particular place in the string of words. Take for example the error in the following sentence: "Ho diciso di andare alla Russia o preso un aerio che si ciama Aeroflot a **cuminciato** quando stevo a alzanto cuando un ... ". This error "a cuminciato" is classified under the syntactic axis because the phrase lacks a subject pronoun. The following error, instead, is classified under the paradigmatic axis: "Ho diciso di andare alla Russia o preso un aerio che **si ciama** Aeroflot a

cuminciato quando stevo a alzanto cuando un ... ". This error (si ciama), is a non appropriate choice of sound in the initial position (due to dialect interference), since the Standard Italian word for it, would have a "hard" initial sound instead of the palatal sound and would be written "si chiama".

Most of the errors under the syntagmatic axis fall into the syntax, stylistic, phraseology, and sometimes morphology categories. Most of the errors classified in the morphology, semantic, orthography, phonology, and lexical categories belong to the paradigmatic axis.

3.3.4. ERROR DISTRIBUTION

The errors were thus distributed in the following categories: syntax, semantics, morphology, lexis, stylistics, and phonology. This is in accord with the traditional system of linguistic analysis. However, in the course of the analysis, we found it appropriate to add three other classifications: orthography, phraseology, and punctuation.

Errors of syntax are those of improper order of words in phrases and sentences, and improper concordances. Example: "chi trovano" (ci si trovano).

Errors of semantics are the use of a word or words to signify a meaning that is in Standard Italian conveyed by another word. Example: "i mie parente" (i miei genitori); "una bella femmina" (una bella ragazza/donna).

Errors of morphology are the use of wrong endings in declined words, and the wrong formation of words (articles). We have classified as errors of morphology all errors concerning the formatic.1 of articles, as well as the wrong choice of auxiliary verbs. Example: "e li oci" (e gli occhi).

39

Errors of lexis are the use of words that are taken from other linguistic codes. Example: "una **cabana**" (una casetta).

Errors of stylistics are the infusion of expressions belonging to a "register" of the language different from the one appropriate to the composition. They might also be transfer of features from one language to the target language. Example: "ho visitato la campagna" (sono andato in campagna).

Errors of phonology are the words spelled as to reflect sounds that belong to linguistic codes other than Standard Italian. For this classification, it is important to remind the reader that the errors are taken from written compositions, and for that matter, the errors of phonology classified in this research are only the ones that we could clearly assume as such. Example: "inglise" (inglese); "si ciama" (si chiama); "a la **maiestra**" (alla maestra).

Errors of orthography are wrong or inappropriate spelling of words. Example: "resvelliato" (risvegliato).

Errors of phraseology refer to combinations of words which, although they may not be wrong in logical terms, nevertheless do not conform to corresponding expressions in Standard Italian. Example: "**dentro** questo monde" (a questo mondo); "vai a Sicilia" (vai in Sicilia).

Errors of punctuation is naturally all the missing or non appropriate uses of punctuation. Example: "... , 23 Novembre, 1989" (... , 23 novembre 1989).

The distribution of the errors was not always as clear and easy as shown in the examples above. In some cases the error would fit equally well into two of our categories. This is why we formed groupings like: morpho-syntax and morpho-phonology. The following examples will illustrate the point: "io

aveva" (mancato accordo del verbo col soggetto) = morpho-syntax; "assi de solade" (molti soldi) = morpho-phonology.

3.4. COMMENTS ON METHODOLOGY

A language has many aspects. The most obvious aspect is the grammar, visible also on written work. Other parts that form a language are, among others: the social aspect; the facial expression or body movement; the different levels. In order to provide an objective description of the errors, the classification according to the traditional categories of linguistic analysis appeared the most appropriate for this research, since we deal with written compositions, and we were not able to observe the children interacting with the teacher and their families in the school and home environment.

Preceding research done on this same topic, has generally shown only lexical interferences. This study goes further, showing other aspects of the structure of language.

As for the interpretation of the genesis of these errors, we consistently followed the same interpretation for the same error within a given composition. But the interpretation would not necessarily be the same for an identical utterance in another composition. This is because we considered the different languages in contact as variables (consulting the information from the questionnaire), and therefore each composition was treated independently. It is only in the section 'Findings' that we come to whether or not the errors repeated themselves across compositions, and not only throughout one composition.

Considering the number of errors (2439), the number of compositions (50), the rather specific and detailed classification of the errors, and the

background information on each participant, one can accept the position that the data is both reliable and significant.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND COMMENTS

4.1. DISTRIBUTION OF ERRORS

Errors are distributed according to: their axis, syntagmatic or paradigmatic; the traditional categories of linguistic analysis; the categories related to the transition from the oral to the written code; and finally to their cause. When the cause is labelled as interference a further subdivision is introduced.

The distribution of errors found in our compositions is strictly related to a written production and therefore it is natural that part of the distribution includes errors concerning the written aspects of the language. Punctuation and orthography are the two main classification found in this distribution. But interferences from the written codes of French and/or English are also listed.

As for the distribution of interference errors, they are considered in greater detail than the rest. It should be noted that interferences are usually the easiest to recognize among all the causes of errors. Since we know the codes of the French, the English, the dialects and the Italian language, it is

feasible to affirm an interference. When however, there is an error of ignorance or distraction, we do not know precisely why it happens.

4.1.1. AXES

The first distribution of errors is done in two axes: the paradigmatic axis and the sintagmatic axis. As indicated in Figure 1, the paradigmatic axis takes the majority of errors with 82.4%; the sintagmatic axis represents 17.5%; and the remaining 0.1% is formed by 3 errors that could not be identified as either paradigmatic or sintagmatic.
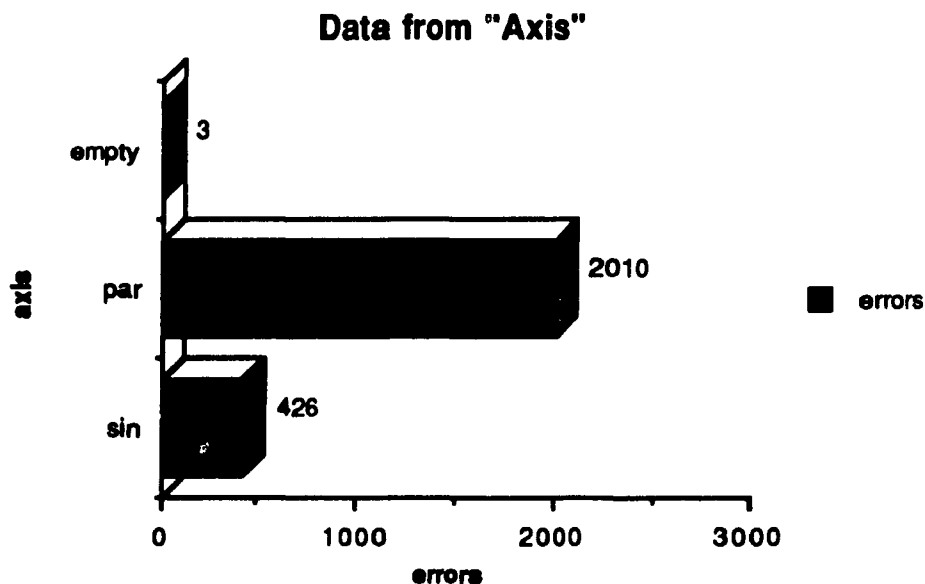
Figure 1

4.1.2. WRITING ERRORS

Some errors are created by the mechanics of writing. In a conversation a graphic error would not exist. These graphic errors account for about 46% of the global findings. They are subdivided into punctuation and orthography

errors. Among the 29 incorrect punctuations, we find omission of comma or colon, and most of all the use of a comma in dates as in the example: "Dicembere 16, 1988". In this case, there is a clear interference from the English method of writing dates.

Table 1

causes/classifications	stylist	phon	phras	lexic	morp	m/ph	ortho	sema	syntax	m/sy	punct	undet	total causes
distraction	13	-	7	4	27	-	395	-	75	3	15	-	539
ignorance	25	3	39	40	84	1	499	-	110	1	13	1	816
undetermined	-	-	-	2	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	2	6
grammatical interf	-	-	4	5	81	-	11	-	17	3	-	-	121
orthographic interf	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	-	-	-	-	11
dialect interference	2	116	9	56	100	80	11	2	5	-	-	-	381
colloquial italian int	24	5	9	10	7	-	-	-	42	-	1	-	98
slang italian interfer	-	13	4	1	5	-	2	-	3	-	-	-	28
english interference	6	3	54	32	6	-	46	-	19	1	-	-	167
french interference	1	13	24	52	21	-	65	1	10	-	-	-	187
english/french inter	-	-	12	11	1	-	43	-	6	-	-	-	73
french/slang italian i	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
french/dialect interf	-	1	-	1	3	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	11
total classifications	71	154	162	214	336	85	1086	4	287	8	29	3	2439

44

The orthographic group is the largest of all accounting for 1086 errors. 499 were classified as distraction errors, 395 as ignorance errors, and 150 as interferences from French and/or English. The remainder is not significant enough to be mentioned, but can be observed on Table 1.

As we noted before, the bulk of orthographic errors is due to the fact that we base our data on written compositions. It is also important to remember that the children are only in the fifth grade, and that they might have additional difficulties writing Italian due to the fact that they study two languages in their regular schools already, English and French. They start in fact to write French and/or English in the first grade.[46] This implies a potential confusion on their part and predictably a number of interferences from these two languages will occur. One more fact to consider in this context is that the PELO chooses not to teach writing until the second grade, and even then writing accounts only for about 20% of the global performance evaluation. Therefore, according to the teaching approach and to the exposure to other languages, a high amount of orthographic errors is not surprising. It is obvious that there are no interferences from the dialect or from other register of the Italian, since these codes are present to the child only in their oral form. Some common orthographic errors from ignorance, distraction and interference are shown here:

"io o ..."   descrizione: omissione di 'h' nel verbo avere
               causa: ignoranza
               asse: paradigmatico
               classificazione: ortografia

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[46] Telephone interview with Pauline Langlais, Education, Direction régionale de Montréal, 4 July 1991.

commenti: errore ripetuto 7 volte nel compito

"prosimo"   descrizione: omissione di una 's'
            causa: distrazione
            asse: paradigmatico
            classificazione: **ortografia**
            commenti: -

"si diche" descrizione: grafia gutturale per palatale
            causa: interferenza dal francese/inglese
            asse: paradigmatico
            classificazione: **ortografia**
            commenti: suono 'ch' in francese/inglese è palatale

4.1.3. LINGUISTIC ERRORS

The errors pertaining to stylistics, phonology, phraseology, lexis, morphology, morpho-phonology, semantics, and morpho-semantics are shown on Table 1 and Figure 2.

Data from "Classifications"
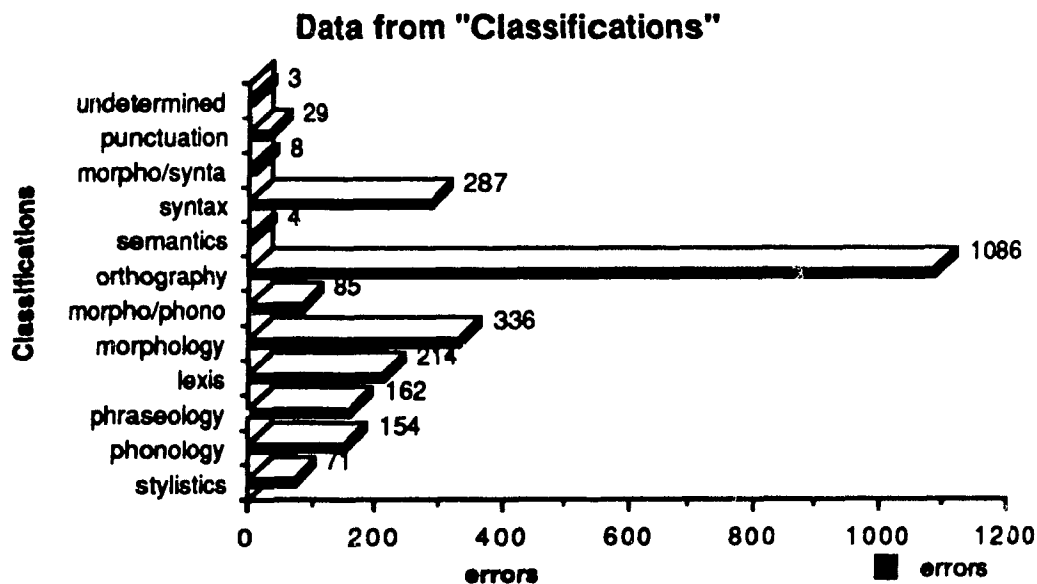
Figure 2

Stylistic errors account for only 3% of the total. They are mostly interferences from colloquial Italian, with a few classified as ignorance and distraction. Only 6 errors of stylistics represent an interference from English. We have to remember that the style of the compositions is understandably very simple and there is not much room for stylistic "virtuosity". Sentences are neither elaborate nor complex. Also, the age of the children has a certain influence on the simplicity of their sentences. From the distribution of the stylistic errors, it is clear that the children do not, ordinarily, translate expressions and sentences from the French or the English to express themselves. In fact, the major interference is from the colloquial Italian. The stylistic error due to ignorance is the most common, probably because of the level of written Italian taught, and the age of the children, as we said before. As in this example: " ... a polire la casa e tanto altro." (abbinamento dell'aggettivo *tanto* con *altro*, usato come pronome neutro).

Phonology errors account for 6.3% of the global data. They occur with 116 errors over 154 in interferences from the dialect. The remaining are interferences from the French, from the Italian slang, and the colloquial Italian. As expected, the phonology interferences were found between languages whose systems are closer to the Standard Italian. Professor Paradis told us that we were supposed to expect phonology errors from the French rather than from the English because of the similarity between the French and the Italian systems of language.[47] But the dialect system is even closer to

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[47] Telephone interview with Michel Paradis, Professor of Linguistics, McGill University, 15 February 1991.

47

the Standard Italian. This explains the heavy distribution of interferences from the dialect since the children probably associate more with the dialect when they think of Standard Italian. Since the compositions are written, the phonology errors are registered as errors only by interpreting the trascribed sound. This method of registering phonological errors does not cover the phonological utterances that the children would have used in speaking. Here are some examples:

"me io ..."   descrizione: uso di 'me' anziché 'ma'
               causa: interferenza dal francese
               asse: paradigmatico
               classificazione: **fonologia**
               commenti: in fr. 'mais' si pronuncia 'me'

"Che sta"   descrizione: uso di 'e' anziché 'i' in 'ci sta'
               causa: interferenza dal dialetto
               asse: paradigmatico
               classificazione: **fonologia**
               commenti: dialetto 'ce stà'

"veloge"   descrizione: uso di 'g' anziché 'c'
               causa: interferenza dall'italiano popolare
               asse: paradigmatico
               classificazione: **fonologia**
               commenti: errore ripetuto nel compito

Phraseology errors are 6.6% of all the errors. They derive mostly from the corresponding expressions in English with 54, from ignorance with 39, and from interference from the French with 24 errors. The rest of them are scattered in other interferences and a few are in distraction. Most phraseology errors involve incorrect prepositions, as in the examples:

"sono andato a Marte"   descrizione: preposizione erronea
                         causa: interferenza dall'inglese
                         asse: paradigmatico
                         classificazione: **fraseologia**
                         commenti: potrebbe essere classificato
                         come un'interferenza interna, visto che
                         anche l'italiano usa spesso la preposiz.

'a' col verbo andare. Il fatto pero' che
in generale l'inglese è una presenza
importante nell'universo linguistico del

bambino, e che in inglese la preposiz.
'to' esprime costantemente il 'moto a
luogo' (mentre in italiano l'uso varia)
ci fa pensare che siamo qui in presenza
di un'interferenza interna fortemente
incoraggiata dal modello inglese. Per
semplificare, l'abbiamo classificato
interferenza dall'inglese.

"vado in un matrimonio" descrizione: preposizione erronea
causa: ignoranza
asse: paradigmatico
classificazione: **fraseologia**
commenti: qui si tratta a rigore di una
interferenza interna. La classificazione
si spiega in quanto il bambino non sa in
quali combinazioni l'italiano standard
usa 'a' e in quali altre usa invece 'in'.

"andare magazinate" descrizione: omissione di preposizione 'a'
causa: interferenza dal francese
asse: sintagmatico
classificazione: **fraseologia**
commenti: in francese il verbo di moto è
seguito immediatamente dal verbo d'azione

The sequence of dates was also considered as a phraseology error, as in

the case:
"Octobre 29 1988" descrizione: sequenza della data erronea
causa: interferenza dall'inglese
asse: sintagmatico
classificazione: **fraseologia**
commenti: -

and expressions like:

"Io sono 11" descrizione: espressione erronea
causa: interferenza dall'inglese
asse: paradigmatico
classificazione: **fraseologia**
commenti: inglese = 'I am 11'

49

It is clear from the examples that phraseology errors often reflect the English use of prepositions and also the ignorance of the Standard Italian preposition system. Since prepositions in English are used quite differently than in other European languages, the children might be confused in their use. As Klajn explains: "Le preposizioni ... si uniscono al verbo o all'aggettivo precedente, piuttosto che al nome o pronome che segue."[48] Given these findings, it might be a good idea to give special attention to the teaching of the correct use of prepositions in the Italian class.

Lexical errors account for 8.8% of all errors. The relatively low percentage shows the importance of this study in respect to preceding ones that tended to concentrate more on the lexical aspects. We do not concentrate on them. 40 of them can be attributed to the "ignorance" of the correct word. 140 are due to interference from other linguistic codes: 56 from dialect, 52 from French, and 32 from English interference. Considering the contact of languages that our subjects are exposed to, we are rather surprised at the low percentage of lexical interferences. We would have expected more words taken from the French, English, and dialect spoken at home. Furthermore, almost none of the words that are indicated as characteristic of the Italianese were in our data. Words such as those presented by Villata in his various studies based on interviews and written works of children, adolescents, and young adults, are not part of our interference findings. For example: 'carpeta=tappeto'; garabicio=spazzatura'; 'autobusso=autobus'; 'amicale=amichevole'; 'gatto=dolce'; and 'demenaggio=trasloco'.[49] For the most part, the lexical errors look like these:

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[48] Ivan Klajn, *Influssi inglesi nella lingua italiana* (Firenze: Olschki Editore, 1972), p. 190.

[49] Bruno Villata, op. cit., pp. 40, 41, 76, 77.

"il lavore"   descrizione: espressione per 'lui lavora'
              causa: interferenza dal francese
              asse: paradigmatico
              classificazione: **lessico**
              commenti: 'il travaille'. Il soggetto è preso di peso
              dal francese, senza contatti con l'italiano.

"andare **magazinate**"   descrizione: espressione erronea per
                          'far spese'
                          causa: interferenza dal francese/inglese
                          asse: paradigmatico
                          classificazione: **lessico**
                          commenti: interessante sovrapposizione
                                    di una desinenza inglese a un
                                    verbo francese

"**aseui ragasi**"   descrizione: uso di 'assai' come aggettivo anziché
                                  'molti'
                     causa: interferenza dal dialetto
                     asse: paradigmatico
                     classificazione: **lessico**
                     commenti: -

"il peù **spito**"   descrizione: lessico erroneo
                     causa: interferenza dall'inglese
                     asse: paradigmatico
                     classificazione: **lessico**
                     commenti: sovrapposizione dell'inglese 'speed'
                               all'italiano 'presto'

Morphology errors, including the morpho-phonology and the morpho-syntactic errors, account for 17.6% of the global findings. For the distribution of the morpho-phonology errors, 80 over 85 are linked to the interference from the dialect. Four of the remaining 5 are linked with the interference from the French and the dialect (it could be an interference from French and/or from the dialect), and 1 error is in the ignorance category. If the morpho-phonological errors would be added to the phonological errors encountered in the dialect interference, the numbers would raise to 201 errors

due to interferences from the dialect on the phonology and 184 on morphology. These numbers affirm the influence of the dialect. Considering the purely morphological errors, the distribution is significant in interference from the dialect with 100; ignorance with 84; grammatical interference with 81; distraction with 27; and 21 in French interferences. The remainder is scattered through the other interferences (see Table 1). Some typical examples are:

"a mea staza" descrizione: aggettivo possessivo erroneo
causa: interferenza dal dialetto
asse: paradigmatico
classificazione: **morfologia**
commenti: 'la mia stanza'

"a vendatto" descrizione: desinenza del verbo erronea
causa: interferenza grammaticale
asse: paradigmatico
classificazione: **morfologia**
commenti: 'ha venduto' con la desinenza dei
verbi di prima coniugazione (-ato)

"me sono dito" descrizione: grafia per 'detto'
causa: interferenza dal dialetto
asse: paradigmatico
classificazione: **morfo-fonologia**
commenti: -

"io stava" descrizione: mancato accordo fra soggetto e verbo
causa: interferenza grammaticale
asse: paradigmatico
classificazione: **morfo-sintassi**
commenti: 'overregularisation' della desinenza
femminile, perchè l'alunna è di genere
femminile (?)

Semantical errors are 4 and account for 0.2% of the total findings. From the 4 errors, 2 are from the interference from the dialect category:

"mi a imparate" descrizione: uso erroneo del verbo 'imparare'
causa: interferenza dal dialetto
asse: paradigmatico
classificazione: **semantica**

commenti: errore comune anche in Italia

"con una femina" descrizione: sostantivo non appropriato
                      causa: interferenza dal dialetto

                      asse: paradigmatico
                      classificazione: **semantica**
                      commenti: -

One of the 4 errors is undetermined and the other is from a French
interference:
"i mie parente"   descrizione: uso di 'parente' anziché 'genitori'
                      causa: interferenza dal francese
                      asse: paradigmatico
                      classificazione: **semantica**
                      commenti: -

Strangely enough, there are very few findings in this classification. As
it is with lexical interferences from French and English, we are surprised not
to find more semantical interferences.

Errors of syntax account for 11.8% and amount to 287. They are found
almost everywhere, but the majority of the errors is found under the causes
of ignorance with 110; distraction with 75; and interference from the
colloquial Italian with 42 errors. Some examples will show the improper
sequence of a phrase:

"Sepre a toccare"   descrizione: frase sospesa, manca il
                                  verbo reggente
                      causa: ignoranza
                      asse: sintagmatico
                      classificazione: **sintassi**
                      commenti: -

"Questa bambino" descrizione: errore nell'accordo nome-
                                  aggettivo
                      causa: distrazione
                      asse: sintagmatico
                      classificazione: **sintassi**
                      commenti: errore non ripetuto

53

"touto di cause mia" descrizione: costruzione partitiva
causa: interferenza dal francese
asse: sintagmatico
classificazione: **sintassi**
commenti: -

Syntactical errors are, after the orthographical and morphological, the main errors produced by our subjects. This finding indicates a weakness in producing correct sentences at the morpho-syntactical level. Since morphology and syntax are the structure of the language, it is significant that we see in the findings a great number of errors in these two classifications.

4.2. CAUSES

The major causes are ignorance, distraction and interference. Errors originating from ignorance (816), and errors from distraction (539), outnumber the others by far. They account for 55.6% of the global data collected. Interference errors are 1078 and account for 44.2% of the total. On Table 1 and Figure 3, the details are put in perspective.

Data from "Causes"

Causes / Errors:
- int.fr./dialect — 11
- int.fr./it.slan — 1
- int.fr./engl. — 73
- int.french — 187
- int.english — 167
- int.ital.slang — 28
- int.ital.colloq — 98
- int.dialect — 381
- int.ortho — 11
- int.grammat. — 121
- undetermined — 6
- ignorance — 816
- distraction — 539
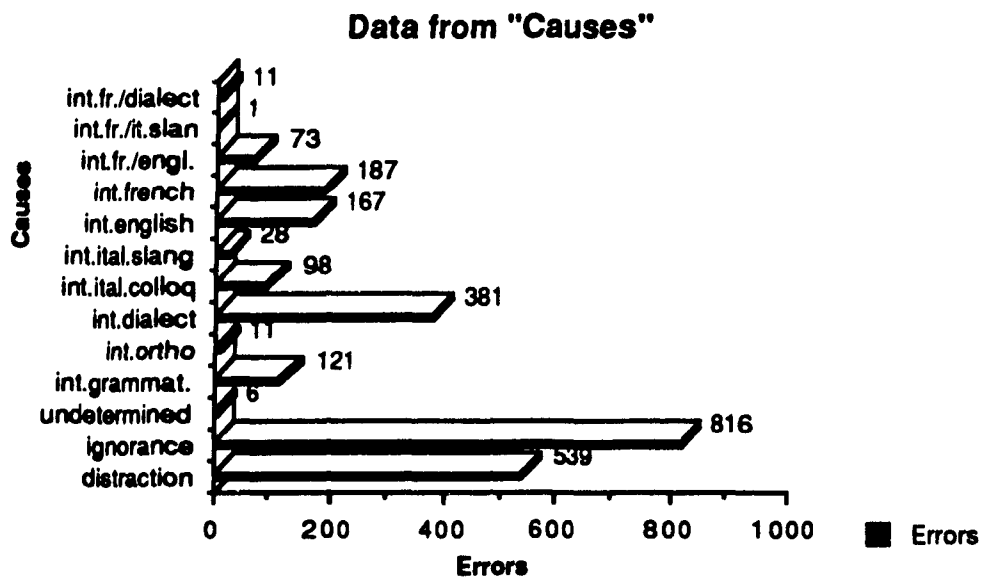
Figure 3

On a percentage scale, the three main distributions are shown in Figure 4. Since this research focuses on interferences, the other errors are not analysed in depth. The high percentage of errors due to ignorance and to distraction includes all the rest of the errors that are not part of the interference analysis.

Data from "Causes"
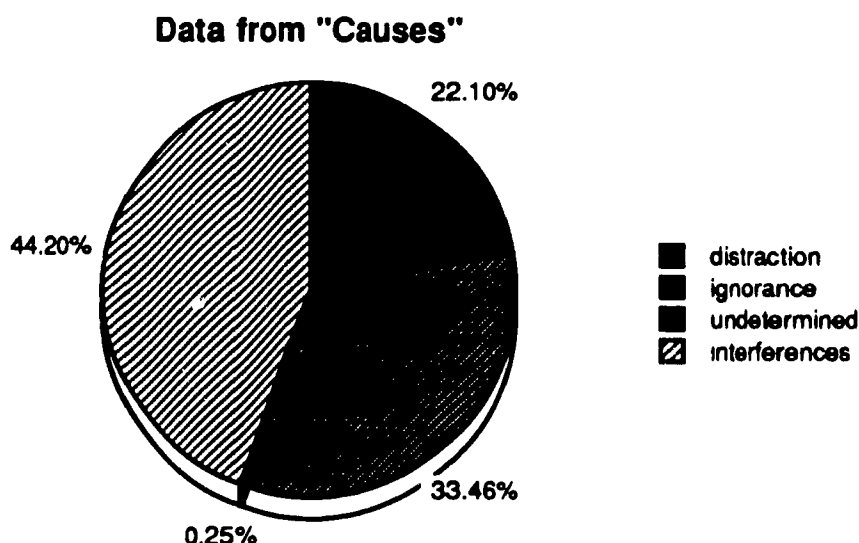
Figure 4

4.2.1. DISTRIBUTION OF INTERFERENCES

Errors which are found in the interference section and which are due solely to writing, are distributed into errors from written French (65), errors from written English (46), errors from written French and/or English (43), and errors from Italian orthography (37). Therefore, the interferences that occurred in writing, but might not have occured in speech, come to a total of 191 errors, that is 7.8% of the global findings. In this particular case, interferences from written Italian include all errors pertaining to orthographic interferences, interferences from the dialect, interferences from the Italian slang, and interferences from the colloquial Italian. And when we

56

write 'French and/or English' we include all errors where the interference might be from one or the other or both. The percentage distribution of interferences pertaining to the total of 191 orthographic and punctuation errors is shown on Figure 5.

Data from "Written Interferences"
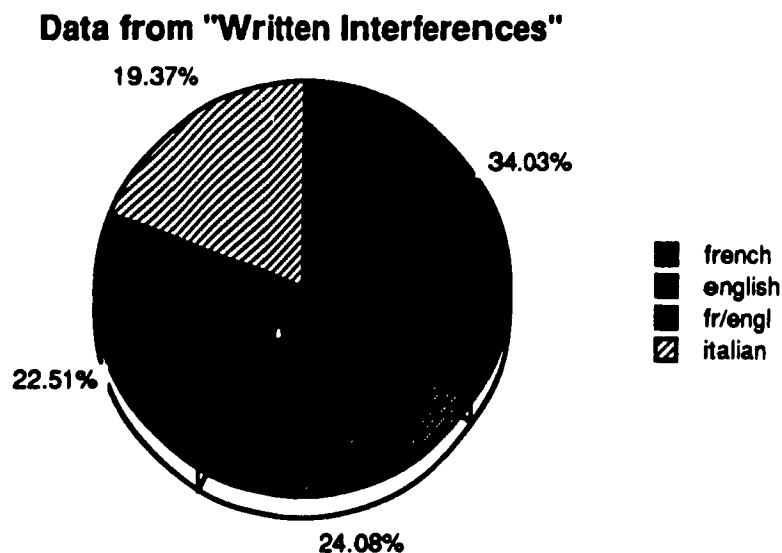
Figure 5

As far as purely linguistic errors are concerned, the distribution includes interferences from the French (132), from the English (121), from the French and/or English (30), and from the Italian (613), for a total of 36.7%. It is very interesting that the great majority are 'interferences' from Italian, leading to speculation as whether these errors might have been produced by children writing in Italy. The interferences from French and/or slang Italian and from French and/or dialect are minimal, and we have included them as French interferences or as slang Italian and dialect interferences on Table 1. The percentage distribution of linguistic interferences is shown on Figure 6.

Data from "Linguistic Interferences"

14./37%

13.50%

3.35%

68.42%

- ■ french
- ■ english
- ■ fr/engl
- ▨ italian
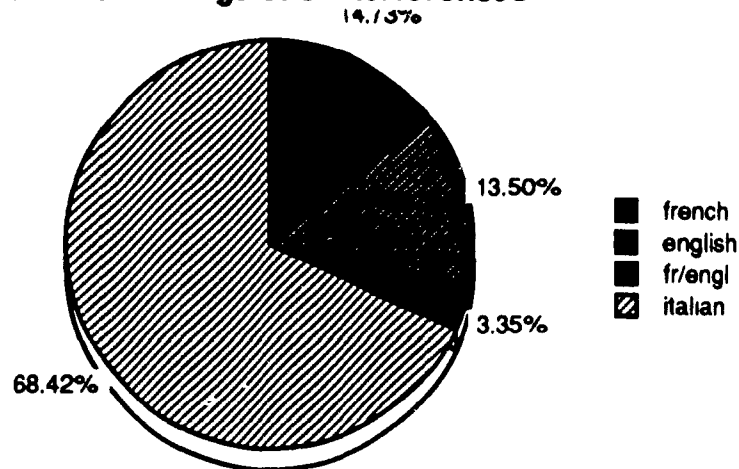
Figure 6

4.2.2. ITALIAN INTERFERENCES

The Italian interferences are subdivided into orthographic errors, dialect, colloquial Italian, and slang Italian interferences.

The first subdivision of Italian interferences groups all the orthographic errors produced by dialect, slang, and colloquial interferences. Orthographic interferences account for 38 errors, representing 1.6% of the total findings. Most of these errors are generated by dialect interference (13), interference of grammar rules of Standard Italian (11), and orthographic interference from the Italian (11). The following examples are characteristic of these errors:

"le belle quosi" descrizione: grafia 'qu' per 'c'
 causa: interferenza dal dialetto
 asse: paradigmatico
 classificazione: ortografia
 commenti: la presenza del dittongo nella
 forma dialettale genera la grafia con la 'q'

"me a no vesto" descrizione: grafia per 'visto'
 causa: interferenza ortografica
 asse: paradigmatico

58

classificazione: ortografia
commenti: interferenza dalle altre forme del verbo
'vedere'

"il mio **bikino**"   descrizione: desinenza erronea
causa: interferenza grammaticale
asse: paradigmatico
classificazione: morfologia
commenti: la desinenza insolita '-i' è
sostituita dalla desinenza regolare per
il maschile singolare

The second subdivision groups errors due to interferences from the dialect at a linguistic level (non orthographic level). The findings show 372 errors of dialect interferences which account for 15.3% of global errors. The biggest concentration of dialect interferences is found in the phonology classification with 116 errors. Morphology and morpho-phonology are also very significant classifications of dialect interferences with 180 errors combined, followed by 56 errors found in the lexical classification. These numbers are significant for two reasons: interferences from the dialect are more frequent than any other interference (see Table 1), and the number of errors are the highest in the categories of phonology, lexis, morphology and morpho-phonology. (see Table 1 and Figure 7).

Data from "Dialect Interferences"

syntax 5
semantics 2
morpho-phono 80
morphology 100
lexis 56
phraseology 9
phonology
stylistic 2

classifications

■ errors

0   20   40   60   80   100   120
errors
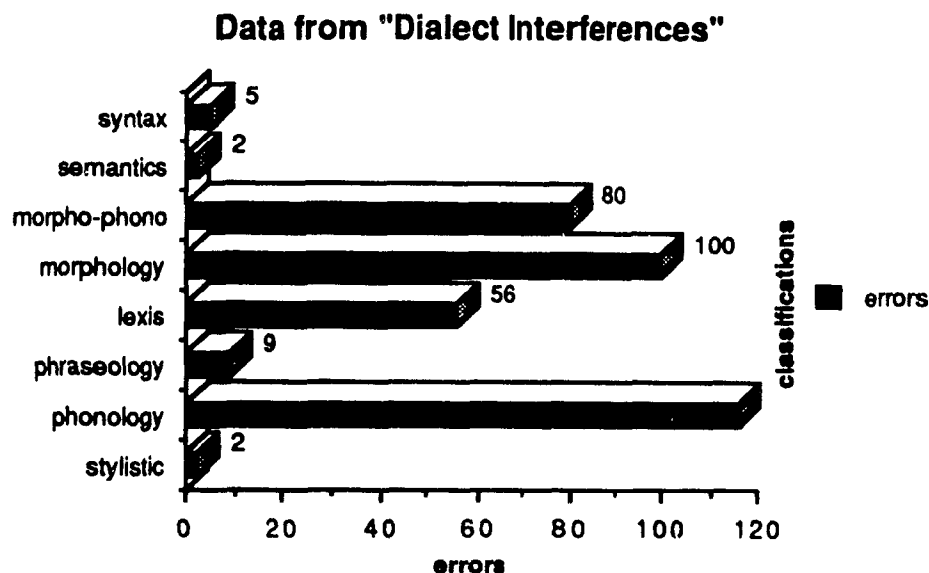
Figure 7

As we see from Figure 7, dialect interference occupies the third place in percentage of errors. Here are some examples:

"io o catato"   descrizione: verbo 'catare' anzichè 'comprare'
                   causa: interferenza dal dialetto
                   asse: paradigmatico
                   classificazione: **lessico**
                   commenti: verbo dialettale 'cattare'.
                   Cfr. italiano 'accattare'

"stavo a camminare"   descrizione: espressione erronea
                       causa: interferenza dal dialetto
                       asse: sintagmatico
                       classificazione: **stilistica**
                       commenti: l'italiano possiede
                       l'espressione 'stare a fare qualcosa'.
                       In questo caso però l'espressione
                       corretta sarebbe stata 'stavo
                       camminando'.

"voglio parlari"   descrizione: desinenza del verbo erronea
                   causa: interferenza dal dialetto
                   asse: paradigmatico
                   classificazione: **morfo-fonologia**
                   commenti: 'i' è la desinenza normale
                   dell'infinito in siciliano

60

"lo cane"   descrizione: articolo erroneo
             causa: interferenza dal dialetto
             asse: paradigmatico
             classificazione: **morfologia**
             commenti: l'errore riflette l'uso dialettale
             dell'articolo

"non fa na coso"   descrizione: espressione per 'non fa nulla'
                    causa: interferenza dal dialetto
                    asse: paradigmatico
                    classificazione: **fraseologia**
                    commenti: -

From the results we see that interference from the dialect is very strong particularly on the linguistic level, while almost irrelevant at the written interference level. This shows that dialect is the language on which these children rely the most when trying to express themselves in Standard Italian. Some of the errors derive from a code that while not strictly dialect, may be defined as colloquial Italian. As we said before, the dialect is the language closest to Standard Italian.

The third subdivision considers the regrouping of all the linguistical errors due to interferences from the colloquial Italian. The number of errors is 97, which is almost 4% of the total errors. The interferences are located in syntactical errors (42), stylistic errors (24), lexical errors (10), phraseology errors (9), morphology errors (7), and phonology errors (5). It is clear that interference from colloquial Italian results mostly in syntactical errors. As mentioned earlier, stylistics is not well developed at our subjects' age. Therefore we do not consider stylistic errors to be of great importance. In the case of colloquial interference, the stylistic errors are due not only to the age and grade of the children, but also and more importantly, to the way of speaking incorrectly, or using colloquial expressions that are improper in Standard Italian as this example illustrates:

61

"e mo era"   descrizione: incongruenza fra un avverbio
                  che indica l'attualità e il tempo passato del
                  verbo
                  causa: interferenza dall'italiano non curato
                  asse: sintagmatico
                  classificazione: **stilistica**
                  commenti: 'mo' = 'adesso'

Most of these errors are produced in Italy as well, and some are even accepted expressions of a region. Sometimes they are no longer considered errors on a speaking level, but they are inappropriate in a written utterance.

Here are some more examples of Italian colloquial interferences:

"e digli tutti li"   descrizione: uso di 'gli' come oggetto
                              indiretto plurale
                  causa: interferenza dall'italiano non curato
                  asse: sintagmatico
                  classificazione: **sintassi**
                  commenti: -

"ci sta"   descrizione: 'ci sta' anziché 'c'è'
                  causa: interferenza dall'italiano non curato
                  asse: paradigmatico
                  classificazione: **semantica**
                  commenti: uso diffuso anche in Italia

The last subdivision concerns interference from the Italian slang. According to the linguistic division, only 26 errors were found in this grouping of which 13 errors are in the phonology classification, 5 errors in morphology, 4 errors in phraseology and 3 errors in syntax. Slang Italian is evidently not a major interference, in the sense that these interferences occur on a phonological base and reflect more a spoken interference. One example of phonological error due to slang interference is:

"un aerio"   descrizione: uso di 'i' anziché 'e'
                  causa: **interferenza dall'italiano popolare**
                  asse: paradigmatico
                  classificazione: **fonologia**
                  commenti: eo>jo fenomeno comune di
                          trasformazione fonetica

4.3. COMMENTS ON RESULTS

The data collected shows an abundance of orthography errors. Most of these errors are the result of confusion concerning the proper writing of a word. This confusion is frequently derived by the different codes that the child knows and does not distinguish one from the others clearly enough. One recurrent confusion that is virtually found in every composition is the code switching of French and English with Italian concerning the 'c' and the 'ch' sound. In Italian the 'c' followed by the vowels 'a' 'o' and 'u' has a guttural sound. The 'c' followed by the vowels 'e' and 'i' instead, has a palatal sound. But to transform the palatal sounds of 'ce' and 'ci' into a guttural sound, the 'h' is needed: 'che' and 'chi'. So 'ce' and 'ci' are palatal sounds and 'che' and 'chi' are guttural sounds. This particular orthographic rule appears particularly difficult to grasp and has created a great confusion among children learning Italian. The reason is probably found in the 'co-presence' in the child's linguistic universe of two language systems where the combination 'ch' is governed by contrasting rules. Since in French and in English the 'ch' corresponds to a palatal sound and in the Italian it is a guttural sound, the confusion is both predictable and abundant in our results. The orthographic interference derived from this confusion is so strong and persistent that, in our opinion, it merits particular pedagogical attention. This orthographic rule is certainly one of the first rules taught in the Italian school, but because it is so strongly opposed to the rules of the French and the English languages, the pedagogical approach has to be adapted to reinforce the comprehension of the opposition between the languages concerned.

Another fact arising from the results is the predominant amount of errors concerning the articles and the gender of nouns. Errors such as the following are frequent:

"dei anziani"   descrizione: articolo erroneo
                 causa: ignoranza
                 asse: paradigmatico
                 classificazione: morfologia
                 commenti: -

These errors are found in every composition and sometimes look like interferences from the French 'les' or from the dialect 'li', and at other times it is impossible to find a viable cause association. In our opinion, the error is due to the "co-presence" of several systems that are at once the same and different from one another: English has no spelled gender, French has a unified form for the plural but distinguishes between masculin and feminin in the singular, Standard Italian has a variety of forms for both the singular and the plural, and the dialect has usually just as many forms but with differing themes. In a research done on accuracy in gender marking on children attending the PICAI, the "results indicate greater accuracy among intermediate than elementary students; girls than boys; students educated in French than those educated in English. Error patterns show unstable forms, over use of masculine articles, evidence of dialect interference. It appears that children learn articles paired with word bases and pay less attention to final vowel gender markers in the language acquisition process."[50] Most of the errors with final vowel in '-e' have been placed under the cause of dialect interferences, because of the indistinct final vowel common in most of the

[50] Susanna E. Barbatbun, "Standard Italian in a Heritage Language Program: Accuracy in Gender Marking," Diss. Concordia University 1987, p. iii.

southern dialects. Errors concerning the final vowel '-e' are 56 in the results, and errors involving articles are 116 over all the results.

Differences between the number of errors in compositions from the PICAI and those from the PELO are not significant. The total number of errors found in the PICAI compositions is 1164 with an average per composition of 46.6. The total number of errors found in the PELO compositions is 1275 with an average per composition of 51. Compositions from the PICAI are normally longer than those from the PELO. One PICAI composition scored 132 errors and another 144 errors in a 338 and 225 word compositions respectively. Among the PELO compositions two are very short, one has 5 errors out of 13 words, the other has 9 errors out of 84.

A factor that must be remembered is that the PICAI has three continuous hours of classes and therefore the students had more time to write a composition; whereas the PELO has 35 minutes each session, and therefore students had much less time to write the composition. Even if a PELO student wrote over two days, he would have to interrupt work and there would still be less time available than at the PICAI. While we cannot tell for certain that these time factors affected the correctness of the compositions, we point them out as probable variables.

When we began this research, we anticipated finding certain differences between the PICAI and the PELO due to the following facts:

PELO: - classes are daily throughout the week

            - lessons are given during regular school hours

            - communicative approach used

            - writing starts only at second grade

            - writing accounts for 50% of evaluation at the fifth

              grade

            - majority of teachers follow pedagogical courses

              and seminars offered to them

PICAI: - classes are one day per week for 3 hours

            - lessons are given on Saturday outside regular

              school hours

            - taught in traditional manner

            - writing starts in first grade

            - writing is considered as the proof of the acquisition of

              the language and its rules.

            - teachers are encouraged to attend

              pedagogical classes organized for them, but few

              do attend

These differences seem to compensate each other, even though we are far from suggesting that the two approaches are perfect. If we consider the length of each class, meeting once a week is advantageous because students and teacher have an extended period to diversify approaches. But one session is distant in time from the next one. If instead the classes are daily, students are exposed to the target language for a shorter time but regularly throughout the week. This takes advantage of a young student's shorter attention span. On the other hand, the teacher might find the duration of 35 minutes very limiting and might not properly complete a lesson.

Even though the errors from the compositions of the PELO and PICAI are not greatly different from one another, some things are noticeable: in the compositions from the PELO children, the sentences are generally shorter and of simpler structure than the compositions from the PICAI. This might be because, as previously mentioned, the writing is not the priority in the communicative approach, or at least not at the elementary level. The students also seem to be restrained in the story they tell as if they lack imagination, or as if they must make sure they stay rigidly close to the chosen theme of the composition. But this last fact can be explained easily by the constrained time factor.

As for the PICAI, we find that the compositions are longer and more elaborate than those of the PELO. But even if these children learn how to write at an earlier stage, they nevertheless produce a similar percentage of errors, which they do not seem to overcome better then the PELO children. This particular fact might show, after further research, that these are the "necessary" errors that children produce at this stage and errors that could disappear with specific pedagogical methodologies. To cope with errors that are repeated through the compositions, teachers should consider finding new classroom material to highlight the difficulties that the children will encounter. Danesi proposes the use of contrastive analysis to approach errors of interferences and habits of the native language.[51]

The results show that no matter what kind of approach was used, the errors would repeat themselves throughout the compositions. This indicates that most of the errors are predictable and that they depend on an internal

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[51] Marcel Danesi and Robert J. Di Pietro, *Contrastive Analysis for the Contemporary Second Language Classroom* (Toronto: OISE Press, 1991), pp. 82-87.

process of acquiring the language. But we also believe that some of the most common errors would not be repeated as often if there were a particular strategy to teach the difficult parts of the language (such as the rule of the 'ch' guttural instead of palatal) taking into consideration the environmental language(s). In the case of errors of interferences, the results clearly show that these are a high percentage. These errors too are predictable, but many of them could probably be more easily overcome if a teacher were aware of the phenomena of languages in contact, and could anticipate the difficulties of these contacts. And as for the other errors due to distraction or to inexplicable causes, these are possibly caused by the still unknown processes of language learning, or possibly because the subjects' thought and writing temporarily went separate ways.

CONCLUSION

The first step of this project was to collect a sample of errors committed by fifth grade children of Italian origin who were studying Standard Italian in two different teaching settings. Then an analysis of the errors determined the causes and interferences occurring in the process of learning Standard Italian. The results show that while some errors are predictable, it would be possible to minimize these errors if we could understand the psycho-linguistic phenomena that are created in the mind of the learner and provide proper pedagogical strategy. One of the psycho-linguistical phenomena in the case of our subjects is the difficulty of the contemporary presence of different language systems with rules that are contrary to the Standard Italian. Once such difficulties are identified and the most frequent errors recognized, the teacher will be able to elaborate teaching strategies that will facilitate the learning process.

Despite teaching strategies, some errors are unpreventable. These errors are part of the natural process of learning a language and are therefore necessary for the student. In fact without these necessary errors, the student could not progress in his acquisition of the language.

Interferences from known languages prove to be relevant to the research as a major cause of errors. The biggest interference among our subjects is from the dialect of origin, the language that is probably spoken at home among family members. Interferences from the French and the English are almost equal in number showing that the children probably know both English and French, and that both languages come in contact with the Standard Italian that they are learning. In some cases the errors are classified

under French and English interference together, for the reason that they might be from one and/or the other and we could not distinguish them. Some interferences are also noticeable from the colloquial Italian. This indicates that the dialect spoken at home might be diluted by some regional Italian with the consequence being colloquial expressions that are considered neither dialect nor Standard Italian.

Strangely, the data shows no trace of words often found in the Italianese, e.g.: "carpeta" for "tappeto", or "iarda" for "cortile" and so forth. These were not visible in the compositions. Can this mean that children are aware of the koiné Italianese and they know that it is not part of the Standard Italian? Are the teachers more careful not to use these expressions? Further study in this direction would help answer the questions. There is no doubt though, that the Italian spoken at home, even if it is a dialect, gives the child the most important support in the enterprise of expressing himself in Standard Italian. Even if this Italian occasionally generates an error, the claim to the linguistic patrimony is motivational and therefore valuable. At the same time it is clear that the child realizes that he is in front of a different Italian "register" from the one spoken at home. The dialect system for the article, for example, can bring the child to commit an error when writing in Standard Italian, but it is never transcribed directly from the dialect.

It would be very interesting to examine French and English compositions written by the same children and compare errors found there with errors found in the Italian compositions.

Moreover, we wish to note that despite slight differences in methodology between the PICAI and the PELO, no significant difference was found in either the production of errors or in their causes. This would

indicate that no matter when the children start with the writing of Standard Italian, their achievement is the same.

In conclusion we suggest that this study be considered as a base of comparison for further research. We do not consider the pedagogical suggestions to be final and definitive. But they do provide a hint for better analysis of the errors of our students. The findings might also suggest new ways of correcting errors. Most of all, tough, we encourage teachers to be aware of the many interferences that occur in the process of learning Standard Italian in Montreal, and not to treat these interference errors as regular errors. The student would profit more by understanding why he produces such errors, instead of merely being shown the correct expression. It is most important to bear in mind that the situation of learning Standard Italian in Montreal is different from that in other places, and has to be approached differently according to the degree of anticipated difficulty. For this reason, not all the pedagogy that works in other countries would necessarily work in Montreal. The programs prepared in Italy for the teaching of Italian outside Italy do not consider the particularity of Montreal's multilingual situation, and therefore it would be wise to choose carefully the material or method used to teach Italophones in this city. But the obvious corollary to the difficulties encountered when teaching Italian to the children of Montreal is that they are already on their way to fluency in several languages. This is the richness of Italian immigrants' children in Montreal.

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APPENDIX I

QUESTIONARIO

Nome:................................

Scuola: PICAI

1) Quanti anni hai?...

2) Dove sei nato/a?...

3) Dove è nato tuo padre?...

4) Quando sono venuti in Canada i tuoi genitori?.........................

5) Hai dei nonni, zii, o cugini che abitano in Italia?......................

Si...................No..................Chi?...

6) T u   sei   mai   stato/a   in   Italia?

Si.......................No..

Quante volte?...

Quanti anni avevi?..

7) Ti piacerebbe vivere in Italia? Perchè si/Perchè no?

....

....

8) Quale lingua parlate di più a casa?..

Quale lingua parli con tua madre?...

Quale lingua parli con tuo padre?..

Quale lingua parli con i tuoi fratelli e sorelle?.............................

Quale lingua parlano i tuoi genitori insieme?.............................

Quale lingua parla tua madre con i suoi amici?...........................

Quale lingua parla tuo padre con i suoi amici?...........................

Quale lingua parla tua madre con te?...

Quale lingua parla tuo padre con te?..

82

9) Quale lingua parlavi quando eri piccolo/a?..

10) Quale lingua parli meglio adesso?..

11) Quale è la lingua che parlano i tuoi amici più cari?..............................

12) I parenti in Italia ti capiscono bene quando parli con loro

italiano?..

Cosa non capiscono molto bene?

Le parole che dici?..

Le frasi che dici?..

L'accento francese o inglese?..

13) Mentre parli in italiano ti capita di usare delle parole che sai che non

sono italiane?..

14) Usi molte parole in inglese o francese quando parli in italiano?

Si.......................................No..

15) Quale è la tua lingua preferita?..

Perchè?..

16) E' importante imparare l'italiano per te? Si.......................No.......................

Perchè si?..

Perchè no?..

17) Leggi libri o fumetti in italiano? Si.......................No.......................

18) Qualcuno ti legge dei libri in italiano? Si.......................No.......................

83

APPENDIX II

COMPOSIZIONI

La Principessa Triste

Cera una volta una foresta grande
Nel centro cera un palazzo è a l'altra parte del palazzo, una riviera, pure dei fiorellini colorati.

Ma cera pure una principessa. Questa principessa si chiamava Aristia. Aristia era molto triste. Sua madre non sapeva che fare con lei perchè non sapeva che la faceva cosi triste.

La madre ha consultato i dottori piu finomenali nel mondo. Ma hanno detto che non aveva niente di male.

Allora un giorno sua madre ci ha comprato una machina che schiacci un buttone è ti da che vuoi. Allora la prima cosa ch ha chiesto Aristia e che vuole una amica. Una amica con chi puo giocare.

Sua madre ha schiacciato un buttone è in 5 secondi si ha fatto presente una principessa bellissima. La madre di Aristia ha saltato in aria.
"Ciao! Come ti chiami? ha chiesto Aristia
"Ciao! Mi chiamo Teresa. É tu?
"Io mi chiamo Aristia. Vuoi giocare con me?"
"Si mi piacerebe molto!"
Allora, Aristia è Teresa hanno giocato nei boschi è la piccola principessa ha mai stata piu triste. Hanno stato felice fino alla fine!
La fine.

I Mie Amichi

Io oh tanti amichi me io sollo scrivo di l'amichi favorito. I mie amichi si ciamano: Carmelina, Michelina, Maria Francesca e Rosey. A me piace Carmelina perche siamo stati amichi tanto tempe e perche e intelligente, a me piace Michelina perche e intelligente e perche mi fa ritere, a me piace Maria Francesca perche e tanto intelligente in francese e perche e brava, A me piace Rosey perche mi fa ridere e perche e sportife. A me mi piacano tutti i mie amichi perche sone brave e perche sone intelligente. Io oh altri amichi me io non mio gocco con loro me siamo amichi. Io so la mia amica Carmelina per tre (3) anni da la terca a la quinta e quelle altri amichi les oh saputo queste anno. A me mi piace tutte i mie amichi e sono sicuro ce mi piacano anche.

Un viaggio immaginario

Era dentro un aereoplace che mi portava in Puerto la Cruz dentro lo breisa Venezula.

Io volevo andare perchè volevo videre la speasga e volve videre chi cosa fanno.

Quanda sono arivato a Puerto la Cruz sono visto delle uomi danto bello e goracense, e dopo sono andato dentro millo Motel

Sono andato a mette il mio bikino e sono andato a dentro la picisna e sono andato a a piere lo sole e sono quellque volte dentro la pisina.

Dentro la meie appartamente stava un bangio e un torbion

Dopo sono andata a pisina e videre le uomi dopo un uomo che mi a portatto a paeshegia e dopo quando era tempo di andare a baccito mi sono andato.