INTERFERENCE FROM ENGLISH INTO GERMAN: A CASE STUDY OF JAPANESE GERMAN-LANGUAGE STUDENTS

Rainer Habermeier and Jane Barnes Mack

I. Definition of Interference

The problem of interference from one language into another, especially the interference from the source language into the target language, has been the topic of an expanding body of research since the 1960s. Seminal works on the subject, such as Ulrich Weinrich's *Languages in Contact*, F. A. Rice's *Study of the Role of Second Language*, and J. Juhasz's *Probleme der Interferenz*, set forth examples of interference as a legitimate subject of investigation.

In the meantime, a respected field of linguistic research has been established. It involves the application of comparative, and especially contrastive, linguistics to practical problems. These problems are manifested in the error statistics which come forth in foreign-language teaching or professional interpreting and translation. In the process, such well-known phenomena as Koessler's and Derocquigny's *faux amis* or *la traduction littérale* have been incorporated therein.

In general, "interference" is seen as a term for a transfer which causes errors and reflects the influence of one language on another, but does not change the correct structures in the target language.

This phenomenon is to be distinguished from the influence of a foreign language on the native language, whereby the correct structures are altered. Examples include the influence of Latin on the language of a former Roman colony or the influence of Chinese on Japanese.

Because of correctness assessment in the target language, we therefore differentiate between two kinds of transfer.

Transfer	
Positive Transfer	Negative Transfer (Interference)

Positive transfer occurs when the structures of the source language (which are similar to corresponding structures in the target language) advance the acquisition of and translation into the target language. Usually the student is not aware of its occurrence, and the translator simply uses it as a basis for his work.

Negative transfer—interference (the intervention of the source language in the target language)—is a prime subject of error theory. This field of research is concerned with analysis, "unlearning" (remedial learning), and the prevention of errors. Errors are classified according to causative circumstances, language level, and seriousness. We would like to categorize the latter as follows:

whether the meaning 1) is changed so that misunderstanding (the worst degree of error) or context/cotext absurdity ensues;
2) is destroyed so that incomprehension occurs and communication is interrupted;
3) is disturbed, but the disturbance of meaning, i. e., the flow of communication, can be easily corrected by the recipients;
4) is only marginally, or not at all disturbed, hence the error is "meaning-neutral".

Also well known is the (albeit disputed) differentiation between performance errors and competence errors (S. P. Corder's "The Significance of Learner's Errors", *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching* (IRAL), 5, 1967, 161-171). Competence errors are frequently, even systematically, apparent, and indicate the use of an incorrect rule on the part of the speaker. In contrast, performance errors are sporadic and suggest situative factors, such as stress, temporary breaks in train of thought, or aural irritations (similar to the traditional concepts of assessing oversight errors).

We should also mention here a further differentiation, so as to limit our subject. Research in this field distinguishes between two kinds of interference:

Interference

Intralingual | Interlingual

Intralingual interference occurs within the target language through overgeneralization of one of the language's rules, that is to say, the application of incorrect rules. Examples include the prepositional genitive in English, the rules of which were learned, and then extended to the genitive involving persons:

(1)* The coat of my uncle lay on the floor.

or a German-language student applies the "haben"-perfect rule to a verb of motion:

(2)* Gestern habe ich ins Theater gegangen.

We shall not discuss here such intralingual interferences.

Rather, we would like to concentrate on *interlingual* interferences: errors generated from the transfer of a rule in the source language to the target language. Such interferences from Japanese into English have already been thoroughly researched. Re-interferences from English into Japanese (which should be distinguished from the general influence—*not* transfer—of English on Japanese) are much less frequent, but more interesting. However, important research in bilingualism has already been done in this area.

Yet the interferences from one target language into another target language have been less investigated. They are most apparent in a student who undertakes the study of two foreign languages simultaneously, as often occurs at the lower-division level in Japanese universities. In German high schools, where two or more

foreign languages are taught, such interferences have been the subject of much research, especially those between English and French, the most popular foreign languages. One current hypothesis is that pupils who are beginning the study of foreign languages, summarize, or in any case, do not sufficiently separate, the rule systems of the various languages.

We would like to label as secondary the interlingual interferences between target languages:

Interlingual Interference

Primary | Secondary

Primary interferences are apparent in the influence from the source language—usually the native tongue—on one of the foreign languages subsequently studied.

Hence, we want to concentrate here on secondary interlingual interferences. We are particularly interested in the previously ignored (as far as we know) interferences from English into German, particularly with regard to Japanese students studying German. Although these interferences are less frequent and less disturbing than the primary ones from Japanese into German, they are nonetheless sufficiently numerous to warrant investigation. The same is probably true of the secondary interferences from English into other foreign languages Japanese students study, most notably French. These secondary interferences should not be ignored; rather, they should be productively utilized and investigated for the purpose of error prevention. This paper serves as a short, preliminary study offering empirical evidence of these interferences.

We would also like to mention two further differentiations which are noticeable with interferences. The first involves direct and transposed interferences:

Interlingual Interference

Similative | Dissimilative

With similative interferences, the student transfers structure errors from the source language (the native tongue or a foreign language) to the target language. This usually occurs subconsciously, hence, not on purpose. With dissimilative interferences, the student consciously chooses a structure in the target language which is dissimilar to the functionally corresponding one in the original language. Yet he is not conscious of the fact that he has made a mistake in the target language. This dissimilative interference comes from an incorrect reaction: specifically, the incorrect prevention of a suspected similative interference. These interferences are especially noticeable in good students, and occur far less frequently than similative interferences.

This syndrome carries over into psychological linguistics, and leads to our second differentiation. In addition to the subconscious interferences, there are also intentional ones:

Interference

Subconscious | Intentional

Because interferences involve errors, an intentional interference seems to be a most unusual phenomenon, or even a paradoxical research concept.

Veteran experts in foreign-language instruction nevertheless understand what this concerns. When a student is under time pressure in a stressful situation, in conversation, or taking a test, he perhaps does not remember the correct rule or he feels unable to produce the right structure from some complex rule. He then fills the language gap with a rule or a structure from another language he is more familiar with: either his native tongue or a foreign language he is better at. The incorrect structure is consciously produced from a so-called creole motif to get around the embarrassment of non-communication. Of course, intentional interferences are not common. They are determined by specific factors in the language situation, and hardly ever occur with certain types of speakers.

In the following pages, examples of secondary interferences in German-language instruction will be discussed and analyzed. They have been taken from a very narrow empirical field, specifically, German-language classes for Japanese university students. These examples do not in any way reflect statistically corroborated representativeness. Rather, they repeatedly occur (with some exceptions) in the classroom.

II. Types of Secondary Interferences

Amongst the interferences we investigated, we would like to make the following differentiations:

1. *contextual, especially situative*

A situative interference exists when a speech act, whose category would be correct in the source language, is out of place in the foreign-language situation. Examples: a promise in place of an apology, or worse, an exhortation in place of an opinion. Sociocultural differences could be the source for such interferences, or even language-pragmatic convention: polite requests expressed as questions in the conjunctive because requests in the simple imperative are considered overbearing.

2. *extralingual*

Interferences in the form of gestures, mimicry, or other language-based actions, for example, pointing.

3. *paralingual*

Interferences in the form of speaking tempo, pauses, phonation (whispers, nasalization), sounds of expression (clearing the throat, sighs, etc.).

4. *intonational*
5. *phonetic*
6. *phonematic*

These interferences confuse indistinguishable phonemes in the source language

with distinguishable ones in the target language, for example, Japanese German-language students confusing "l" and "r". Other phonematic interferences include the opposite (but less serious): phonemes in the source language are distinguished in the target language, even though the target language does not distinguish them as phonemes.

7. *morphematic-grammatical*

With this somewhat hybrid designation, we mean interferences which are carried over from grammatical morphemes or the peculiar character of grammatical categories, for example, the use of the English present tense in the German Präsens.

8. *syntactic*

Interferences in word order.

9. *lexemic*

Interferences in independent morpheme chains (identical to lexemes, "words").

10. *semantic*

These interferences, with the exception of *faux amis*, are not easily defined and limited. Moreover, inferred connotations of words, idioms, and sentences are involved. In addition, there are semantic interferences which transfer only segments of denotative meaning, and it is specifically these segments which are missing from the unit in the target language. There are also often interferences in homophones, but these are a borderline case which nevertheless can often be quite humorous in the context of foreign-language communication:

(3) Als wir in das neue Haus einzogen, wechselten wir sogleich das Schloß.

Of course, the "Türschloß" (the lock) is meant, but is nevertheless translated as:

(4) When we moved into the new house, we immediately changed the castle.

11. *stylistic*

A stylistic element which does not belong to the same style range in the target language is carried over through stylistic interferences.

12. *graphemic*

These interferences mostly occur as a result of other transfers, for example, internationalisms—the German "k" for the English "c".

III. Secondary Interferences from English into German

We now turn to the presentation and investigation of concrete examples of Japanese students' secondary interferences from English into German. Secondary *situative*, *extralingual*, and *paralingual* interferences are very seldom noticed in beginning students. This is because both foreign languages are still too remote for them to penetrate the intimate area of language behavior, encompassing extra- and paralingual forms. The learning situation in German-language instruction is usually contingent on the text. Yet it is also still relatively elementary in free conversation, and oriented to structured learning models. The parameters of the learning situation do not allow for the formation of pragmatic structures. Thus,

there are also few interferences from Japanese into German. These are usually more privative, and occur through the omission in German of the customary expressions of emotion. This does not involve any Japanese-German specialisms, but rather, we suspect, a general behavior characteristic of beginning students.

When *situative* interferences and the like occur, as in clearing of the throat or longer pauses, they are not communicatively intentional. Rather, they are caused by deficiencies in competence. Nevertheless, students with a high level of English-language proficiency (usually after living several years in an English-speaking country) sometimes fall victim to these interferences. However, they are very infrequent, and probably are also apparent in Japanese. Thus, they fall somewhere between primary and secondary interferences, and thus can be ignored here.

Intonational interferences are almost always phonetically linked and should be treated as such. A pure intonational interference (often entrenched and not easily corrected) is apparent in the pronunciation of "Jápan" and "Japáner". Starting in junior high school, pupils are inculcated with foreign perspectives of their national identity. Thus, the English words for this identity are fraught with emotional overtones, apparently so much so that it is difficult to replace these words with those in another foreign language—particularly German—because the German words for this identity are graphically and phonetically similar to those in English.

Occasionally, utterances in which sentence-intonational interferences are present occur. However, it is difficult to determine whether they are primary or secondary. The sentence-intonation pattern in the three languages is usually so subtle and diverse that its investigation is better left to intonation experts.

Phonetic interferences are numerous, foremost in the speaker's general approach to pronunciation, in which his German is colored by a more or less strong English accent. However, the incidence of this type of interference has dramatically receded in recent years. A general estimate indicates about 20% in the 1980s and about 10% in the 1990s. It is probably a result of the students' English-language ability being subconsciously extended to a general foreign-language competence, reflecting somewhat earlier widely-held popular opinion in Japan that all foreigners can speak English.

Beginning in high school, there are the difficult drills in the somewhat remote British-English phonetics, and even more demanding American English, which are particularly arduous for Japanese (but not only for them). The difficulty of these drills can easily lead to traumatic stress, and they take so much energy that the laboriously acquired pronunciation competence in English hinders further foreign-language pronunciation competence. Moreover, a large part of this pronunciation fixation cannot be corrected, even after months of practice. This phenomenon reflects the deep psychological aspects of the fixation.

Another type of phonetic interference involves particular sounds. We present examples below of the most common ones, in which one should distinguish between the English pronunciation of German graphemes and the English pronun-

ciation of German sounds, albeit only from the teacher's example, not from any text.

Regarding error assessment, the second type of interference is, without doubt, of a more serious nature because the correct models given by the teacher are not achieved. This occurs with only a few phonetic sounds, yet very frequently. Essentially, it involves the retroflection of "r" and "l". Other phenomena include the non-aspiration of the silent plosive at the end of a word or before vowels, and the rounded bilabialization of the dentolabials "w/v". These sounds also could be interferences from Japanese and reinforced from English.

The retroflex "r" and "l" reflects the difficulty for Japanese students of distinguishing between "r" and "l" because of the characteristic "r=l" in Japanese. These interferences are first learned in (primarily American) English and are transferred to the second foreign language. This occurs because the energy expended to overcome the extreme difficulty of differentiation between the "r" and "l" in the first foreign language has fixated phonetic competence on the retroflexibility of the "r" and "l". In other words, the student has to maintain in German the difficult acquisition of the English phonetic sounds.

There are also countless phonetic interferences of German grapheme readings, i. e., the other type of phonetic interferences.

Vowel graphemes: "a" as [æ] ; "u" as [ʌ], "i" as [ai] ; "e" as [i].

Diphthong graphemes: "au" as [ɔ:] ; "ei" as [ei] ; "eu" as [ju] ; "ie" as [ai].

Consonant graphemes: "th" as [ð, θ] (especially for foreign words with Greek etymology, such as "Mathematik" and "Rhythmus") ; "z" as [z] ("Magazin" is pronounced [mægəzi:n]) ; "ch" as [tʃ], "sh" for [ʃ] (only in word compounds, such as "Kraushaar" or "Haushalt").

Whole grapheme groups or words are also pronounced in English, especially those which look like English words ; for example, internationalisms from Greek or Latin "sion" and "tion" as [ʃən], and "-abel" as [eibl]. "Konstruktion" becomes [kənstrʌkʃən], "Analyse" [ænəlaiz], "Auto" [ɔ:təu], and "Autor" [ɔ:tə]. Primary and secondary interferences converge in the [bʌs] sound, particularly in a Japanese word taken from English. (In turn, the English is shortened from the Latin pronominal case "omnibus".)

Phonematic interferences that are clearly delineated are not apparent to us. We can only mention a partial example, the overdifferentiation of the vocal and silent "s". This difference in the normative strong-articulation school of German pronunciation (Siebs, Vietor, etc.) has been presented as quasi-phonematic, but in reality, it is not.

In certain areas of southern Germany, the vocal and silent "s" are optional or even aleatoric, that is, without any discriminatory value. A word which is pronounced with a vocal "s", according to the standard norm of articulation, is just as often pronounced with a silent "s" and is also regarded as correct. Thus, we can infer that the difference does not have any phonematic value, but rather is an

optional phoneme variation.

In contrast, the difference is labeled phonetically significant in Japanese, and especially in English. Accordingly, there is an expectation on the part of Japanese German-language students that in German, the vocal and silent "s" must be differentiated. This expectation is reinforced from English, and probably also intensified by the German standard-articulation ideologies. The "s" at the beginning of the word, "Sonne", or between vowels, "Rasen", is pronounced so vocally that a native speaker notices it. *Pace* standard-articulation apologists, we assert that this is a manifestation that does not need to be corrected at all.

Morphematic-grammatical interferences are also prevalent, especially the transfer of the English plural "-s". It also exists in German, but with only a few words: "Autos", "Fotos", and a few others, including special cases, like the northern German derivative "Jungs", "Jungens", or die "Fräuleins"—the latter a leftover from the Occupation.

The news magazine *Der Spiegel*, in the context of German reunification, followed this example in 1990 by using the plural "die Deutschlands", instead of the more common "Deutschländer" encountered in other print media. The use of the form remained isolated, however, and disappeared shortly thereafter.

In general, the plural "-s" has kept a foreign-language character in German. Therefore, we can say that, in the following sentences, the plural "-s" reflects interlingual, rather than intralingual, interferences.

(5) Wir grüßten die Professor*s* von weitem.

In place of: Professor*en*.

(6) Die Buss*es* fahren in einer Stunde.

In place of: Buss*e*.

(7) In Tokyo Haus*es* kosten viel Geld.

In place of: In Tokio kosten *Häuser* viel Geld.

(8) Sie setzen sich auf zwei Stuhl*s*.

In place of: *Stühle*

Nevertheless, an intralingual interference cannot be excluded, although only subliminally, within the undoubted dominance of the interlingual. According to our research, a few students who make this kind of error could have been influenced by the German singular genitive of the masculine nomina: "des Professors" (increasingly used today instead of the weakly declined form "des Professoren"), "des Busses", "des Hauses", and "des Stuhls".

The conjugation of the active present, indicative third-person singular, with the "-s" at the end has clear signs of being an interlingual interference.

(9) Sie renn*s* zu der Universität.

In place of: renn*t*

Interferences in tense formation are equally numerous. The future is formed with "wollen", especially in the singular, because of the graphematic and phonetic similarity.

(10) Mein Freund will reisen nach Europa.

In place of: *wird* (the future tense was supposed to have been practiced in this sentence).

(11) Der Chef sagt zu mir, daß ich morgen *will* den Vertrag bekommen.

In place of: daß ich morgen den Vertrag bekommen *werde*.

The simple past and past perfect:

(12) Wir mach*d* unsere Hausarbeit ungern.

In place of: mach*ten*; most likely influenced by the similarity of the words "make" and "machen".

(13) Gestern ich habe in die Stadt gefahren.

In place of: Gestern *bin* ich in die Stadt gefahren.

More noticeable:

(14) Wir haben lauf*ed* im Wald zwei Stunden.

In place of: Wir sind zwei Stunden im Wald *gelaufen*.

Occasionally, there are also strong-verb interferences, for these are assumed to be analogous to the English irregular verbs.

(15) Die Hunde haben ge*runnen* heim.

In place of: Die Hunde sind heim ge*rannt*. (The English participle "run" obviously interferes here.)

(16) Ich habe *dacht*, daß wir gehen in das Kino.

In place of: *gedacht*, daß wir in das Kino gehen. The simple past tense "thought" even influences the spelling.

In addition, there are many passive-voice formation interferences:

(17) Er *war* gerufen bei mir.

In place of: er *wurde* von mir gerufen. From the English

(18) He was called by me.

Here the interference is almost verbatim.

These interferences are facilitated by the German descriptive-passive voice:

(19) Er *war* von mir angerufen. (A stylistically bad sentence, but still grammatically correct. Whether the descriptive-passive voice can be formed from certain verbs like "anrufen" depends on the context.) Moreover, many passive-voice sentences in English can also be understood as descriptive-passive:

(20) He was caught.

This can mean

(21) Er wurde gefangen. (procedural-passive) or

(22) Er war gefangen. (descriptive-passive)

To make this absolutely clear, the German procedural-passive is often formed with "to get" in English:

(23) He got caught.

However, this lexematic differentiation of the passive voice is not a particularly strong area of competence on the part of our English-/German-language students. Thus, verbatim interferences—the most numerous—can not be prevented.

A double interference appears in:

(24) Ihr *seid* ein*ladet* bei uns.

In place of: Ihr *werdet* von uns ein*geladen*. The formation of the procedural-passive was required here. Obviously, the German sentence was transferred from the English:

(25) You are invited by us.

The English passive leads to a further kind of interference:

(26) *Wir sind geraten* zu nehmen das Bus.

Transferred from the English:

(27) We are advised to take the bus.

The correct German version:

(28) *Es wird uns geraten*, den Bus zu nehmen

can also be shortened to:

(29) Uns wird geraten, den Bus zu nehmen.

In English, many indirect objects ("dative objects") can become the subject of a passive-voice sentence, although in German only direct objects ("accusative objects") can do so. In place of the latter, an impersonal passive (that is impossible in English) can be constructed. The subject thereof, "es", can usually be left out, whereby the indirect object comes at the beginning of the sentence. Depending on the cotext, other sentence formations are also possible.

(30) *Geraten wird uns*, den Bus zu nehmen.

(31) Sofort *wird uns geraten*, den Bus zu nehmen.

The personal-passive voice, transferred from English, occurs primarily with the verbs "bringen" (bring), "danken" (thank), "erlauben" (allow), "geben" (give), "glauben" (believe), "helfen" (help), "gehorchen" (obey), "verzeihen" (pardon), "versprechen" (promise), and "zeigen" (show).

A somewhat more serious error occurs in transfers of the passive which are ungrammatical in German and thus not allowed:

(32) Die Dame wurde von ihr Hund gefolgt.

From the English

(33) The lady was followed by her dog.

In German, only the active voice is possible:

(34) Der Dame folgte ihr Hund.

Here the subject in the English sentence becomes an indirect object in the German. In general, the indirect object can be at the beginning of the sentence, but here it must be, because the subject "Hund" is acccompanied by a possessive pronoun, which as a rule, can only be in an anaphoric position.

(35) Ihr Hund folgte der Dame.

is only possible in the cotext of "die Dame" having previously been mentioned. As with "folgen," incorrect passives are transferred, especially with "treffen/ begegnen" (meet), "gefallen" (please), and "widerstehen" (resist).

In contrast, interferences from the English continuous form seldom occur,

probably for a simple reason : students do not often use them, and the same category in German does not exist morphematically.

Nevertheless, there are some humorous exceptions :

(36) Wir sind nun essend unser Frühstück.

In place of : Wir essen nun unser Frühstück.

obviously an interference from the English

(37) We are now eating our breakfast.

We also cannot exclude the possibility of a primary interference from Japanese :

(38) 私たちは今，朝食を食べています。

The same is true for the following sentence :

(39) Wenn wir waren arbeitend, der Unfall passierte.

In place of : Als wir gerade arbeiteten, passierte der Unfall. Or : Als wir gerade bei der Arbeit waren, passierte der Unfall. The model, of course, is :

(40) While we were working, the accident happened.

Even the use of the present-progressive in English for future actions was once transferred by a returnee with near-native speaking ability :

(41) Wir gehen zu lesen das Buch.

In place of : wir lesen sogleich das Buch.

In addition to morphematic interferences, we also want to mention a more difficult-to-comprehend grammatical interference. It usually occurs in tense formation : as with the passive voice, the future is much more often used in English than in German. At any rate, it involves an interference that is almost stylistic.

(42) Morgen wir werden spielen Fußball.

From the English :

(43) Tomorrow we will play football.

In German, the present tense is most commonly used :

(44) Morgen spielen wir Fußball.

This is especially true of the future-perfect that usually has a strong modal sense of presumption in German, and is thus preferably avoided as an expression of prediction.

(45) Nächste Woche Akira wird haben begonnen seine Reise.

From the English :

(46) Next week Akira will have begun his trip.

The correct German :

(47) Nächste Woche hat Akira seine Reise (schon) begonnen.

An example of the future and the future-perfect combined in one sentence structure :

(48) Nachdem abends wir werden gegessen haben, wir werden sehen ein Film.

From the English :

(49) After we will have eaten in the evening, we will see a film.

The correct German :

(50) Nachdem wir abends gegessen haben, sehen wir einen Film.

In the following sentences are examples of various kinds of interference which often occur. First, interferences involving supplementation of the predicate:

(51) Ich dankte *den* Lehrer für sein Geschenk.

From the English:

(52) I thanked the teacher for his present.

In place of: Ich dankte *dem* Lehrer für sein Geschenk.

This confusion of the German indirect object with the direct object, transferred from English, usually occurs with the verbs "antworten" (answer), "glauben" (believe), "helfen" (help), and "folgen" (follow). Nevertheless, a primary interference from Japanese is possible with "glauben" and "helfen":

(53) Die Schüler glauben *den* Lehrer.

In place of: *dem* Lehrer. This could be from the English:

(54) The pupils believe the teacher.

And/or from Japanese:

(55) 学生たちはその先生を信じた。

The same could be true of incorrect direct objects with "helfen":

(56) Die Kinder helfen gerade *ihre* Mutter.

In place of: *ihrer* Mutter—transferred from English:

(57) The children help their mother.

And/or from Japanese:

(58) 子どもたちはお母さんを手伝っている。

Below are a few other representative examples:

(59) Der Polizist nickte seinen Kopf.

From the English:

(60) The policeman nodded his head.

In place of: Der Polizist nickte *mit dem* Kopf.

The student who wrote (59) explained it by saying that the following complementary negation, expressed with a direct object, had influenced her:

(61) Er schüttelte den Kopf.

Thus, (59) could also be an intralingual interference.

Other random interferences include:

(62) Sie heimlich sprechen Politik.

From the English:

(63) They secretly talk politics.

In place of: Sie sprechen heimlich über Politik.

An unintentionally humorous example:

(64) Der Professor fällt durch den Studenten.

From the English:

(65) The professor is failing the student.

If we did not assume an interference from English, this would have an absurd meaning:

(66) The professor falls through the student.

The correct German: Der Professor läßt den Studenten durchfallen.
However, a primary interference from Japanese cannot be ruled out:

(67) 教授はその生徒を落とす。

because the Japanese を-supplementation of the predicate is subconsciously equated with a direct object in German (or English).

(68) Der unreife Apfel schält schlecht.

From the English:

(69) The unripe apple peels badly.

In place of: Der unreife Apfel schält sich schlecht.
Or: Der unreife Apfel läßt sich schlecht schälen.
Again, this could be a primary interference from Japanese:

(70) 熟していないりんごはむきにくい。

There are also numerous transfers from the English "to"+object because the similarity between the English "to" and the German "zu" seems to intensify:

(71) Er lieferte ein Paket zu uns.

From the English:

(72) He delivered a package to us.

In place of: Er lieferte uns ein Paket.
Once again, a primary interference could be involved:

(73) 彼は小包を私たちに届けてくれた。

The Japanese に-supplementation of the predicate is subconsciously equated with an indirect object in German (or English).

The transfer of definite and indefinite articles should also be mentioned. Because there are no articles in Japanese, the student orients himself to the formerly acquired rules of English.

(74) Mensch kann nicht leben ohne Gesellschaft.

From the English:

(75) Man cannot live without society.

In place of: Der Mensch kann nicht ohne Gesellschaft leben.

(76) In Deutsche Geschichte es waren viele Kriege.

From the English:

(77) In German history, there were many wars.

In place of: In der deutschen Geschichte gab es viele Kriege.

The absence of articles in the Japanese language could also have interfered in (74) and (76), but in the following example, it has to be an interference from English:

(78) Heute ich habe ein Kopfweh.

From the English:

(79) Today I have a headache.

In place of: Heute habe ich Kopfweh.

Now we turn to *syntactic* interferences, among the most numerous of all. Several of the above examples also illustrate this type of interference. The major charac-

teristics of these interferences are:

a. The missing inversion, which must be in the main clause in German when a part of the sentence (not the subject) is at the beginning: (7), (13), (42), (45), (48), (76), and (78). Primary interferences from Japanese and intensified secondary interferences from English could also be contributing factors.

b. The failure to put part of the predicate at the end of the sentence, as is often required in certain types of German syntax.

(80) Ich werde besuchen meine Freund.

From the English:

(81) I will visit my friend.

In place of: Ich werde meinen Freund besuchen.

c. The incorrectly placed adverb, especially between the subject and the predicate, in which a primary interference cannot be excluded:

(82) Wir schnell beenden unsere Prüfung.

From the English:

(83) We will quickly finish our exam.

And from the Japanese:

(84) 私たちは早く試験を終える。

In place of: Wir beenden schnell unsere Prüfung.

A double interference could also exist in the following sentences:

(85) Bald der Lehrer kommt.

From the English:

(86) Soon the teacher will come.

And/or from Japanese:

(87) すぐに先生は来るでしょう。

Regarding *lexematic* interferences, we would like to differentiate amongst:

a. those which are transferred from English words and are similar graphematically or phonetically to German words.

b. those which are a transference from dissimilar words.

Interferences of type a. are so numerous and induced by the similarity of much of the vocabulary of both languages, that we can omit examples here. Moreover, they do not cause serious comprehension impairment because the listener, if German is his native tongue, can easily correct them.

Interferences of type b. are primarily intentional, and accompanied by embarrassment. The student is usually aware of the seriousness of these errors, but relies on the English-language ability of the listener.

(88) Wir müssen exakt compare die Wirtschaft der drei Länder.

German speakers who do not know English would not completely understand this sentence. And because it involves the predicate, one of the most important sentence elements, the full meaning of the sentence is unclear and comprehension is blocked.

Semantic interferences are also numerous because of vocabular similarity. This

similarity results from the historical relationship of the languages and also because of the Greco-Latin influences on English and German. Thus, these interferences are replete with *faux amis*. Below are a few examples :

(89) Später wir fuhren in das Zaun.

This sentence, with the exception of the missing inversion and a small gender error (in *den* Zaun) makes sense, but in the context, it does not. It was transferred from English :

(90) Later we drove into the town.

The correct German :

Später fuhren wir in die Stadt. The student who wrote (89) perhaps subconsciously constructed a rule (the English "t" corresponds to the German "z") which correctly represents a process of the second sound shift, yet unfortunately ignores the difference in meaning.

Interferences through *faux amis* whose spelling is also similar or identical are even more numerous : "kind" and "Kind", "gross" and "groß", "wall" and "Wall", "small" and "schmal", "crank" and "krank", etc.

The interferences "who" and "wo", "where" and "wer", "why" and "wie", "when" and "wenn", "then" and "denn", "on" and "an", "by" and "bei", "to" and "zu", "must not" and "muß nicht" are especially frequent :

(91) Du muß nicht kommen spät.

From the English:

(92) You must not come late.

In place of : Du darfst nicht zu spät kommen.

"Gehen" is often misused in the sense of "to go":

(93) In den Ferien wir gehen zu Berlin.

From the English :

(94) During the vacation we will go to Berlin.

In place of : In den Ferien fahren/fliegen wir nach Berlin. Here the denotations between the English "to go" and the German "gehen" are only partially convergent. The convergent component invites an interference in the divergent ones, a process which often occurs with semantic convergence of components. The interference of "fatale Unfall" and "fatal accident" invites a similar recurrence :

(95) Auf die Autobahn ein fataler Unfall war geschehen.

"Ein tödlicher Unfall" was meant, even though "fataler Unfall" also makes some sense, even though imperfectly used.

We cannot offer any clear examples of *stylistic* interferences, certainly not because they do not exist, but because our students are not that advanced in German-language skills. They cannot yet speak or write longer passages which would reflect such interferences.

In contrast, *graphematic* interferences occur very frequently. They usually surface in words whose graphic or phonetic form is similar in English and German.

(96) Unser *Hous* hat *fier* Zimmer.

From the English:

(97) Our house has four rooms.

In place of: Unser Haus hat vier Zimmer.

(98) Er shouvelt den Shnee byside.

From the English:

(99) He is shovelling the snow aside.

"Sh" for the German "sch", even in "Deutshland", and "y" for the German "ei" [ai], often occur. A typical interference:

(100) Wir leben in der Zeit der Telecommunication.

In place of: Telekommunikation. The transfer of English-Romance-language graphemes is especially frequent with internationalisms, particularly "c" for "k". Moreover, it appears impossible to wean students away from the English use of small letters for nouns—and even the use of capital letters in German for the pronoun "ich".

(101) Nach das Mittagessen *Ich* werde fragen den Chef.

From the English:

(102) After lunch I am going to ask the boss.

In place of: Nach dem Mittagessen frage ich den Chef.

The following example was written, in part, with humorous intentions:

(103) Wir mussen night falsh shryven.

IV. Error Assessment

We will now examine, with respect to error assessment, the analytical linguistic levels at which the interferences we investigated occur. Six levels of interference are involved:

1. *Phonetic* interferences: These are numerous, and occur with about 10% of our present German-language students. As mentioned earlier, they are anchored in a general pronunciation syndrome vis-a-vis foreign languages. They do not change or destroy the meaning, but rather disturb it, and thereby make communication more difficult. Correction thereof should be undertaken with caution, and distinguished according to the degree of error. If one wants to, for example, enforce the German "r" and "l", (especially the German uvular "r") over the American retroflex "r" and "l", the end result is often counterproductive because learning resistance and fatigue set in. On the other hand, the pronunciation of the German "die Konstruktion" as [dai kənstrʌkʃən] obviously destroys the meaning and thus is a serious error that must be immediately corrected.

2. *Morphematic-grammatical* interferences: Here also the teacher should proceed with attention to differentiation. Ex. (5), (8), and (9) are relatively innocuous and can be simply corrected, or even ignored, if they occur in conversation practice (so that the student's flow of speech is not interrupted).

Of a more serious nature is the error in (10) because the semantic difference between the German "wollen" and "werden" is analogous to the difference between

the English "to want" and the future tense. It is thus possible that the friend will travel to Europe without wanting to.

The same is true for (11). This is the worst degree of error, i. e., a change of meaning, which can cause misunderstanding. In contrast, (15) is only a disturbance of meaning: communication comes to a standstill because the listener/reader does not know what the speaker means. Nevertheless, there is no misunderstanding. Meaning-neutral errors—actually only in terms of style—are involved in (36) and (39). A listener/reader with some degree of German-language competence could understand the meaning of these sentences.

3. *Syntactic* interferences: These primarily extend from minor disturbances of meaning to meaning-neutral, and should never be corrected during the flow of conversation. In time, the effect of the teacher's model enables them to be forgotten. German is known to be grammatically redundant and its grammatical functions are often determined on multiple levels. Thus, the order of the sentence parts is only one level amongst two or three others. If it is erroneous, one can (with known, albeit, few exceptions) figure out the meaning from the other levels.

4. *Lexematic* interferences: The salient points were discussed above. In addition, we would like to add that an early, if not immediate, correction is also necessary with interferences involving graphically or phonetically similar words. This is especially true if the student shows an obvious tendency to obscure the boundaries between English and German, and resorts to creole German to get himself out of the situation. Above all, the teacher must methodically intervene when the student makes more and more frequent and intentional use of the second type of lexematic interferences. Trust in the English-language competence of a German conversation partner has to be kept to a realistic proportion, and should not exempt the student from a thorough mastery of German.

5. *Semantic* interferences cause, on average, the most serious errors, specifically misunderstandings which the recipient has little chance of recognizing or avoiding. Only the context and cotext can decipher—often, but not always—a misunderstanding through semantic discrepancy. Sentence (89) appears absurd, thus the semantic interference in the word "Zaun" was not too difficult to recognize.

In contrast, neither context nor cotext provides decipherment in sentences (91) and (95). These sentences could trigger serious misunderstandings if they were applied outside the classroom, i. e., in a real-life situation. Thus, semantic interferences, after they have been recognized, must be immediately corrected in drills and tests.

6. *Graphematic* interferences are usually of a minor degree of error and do not disturb understanding, or are meaning-neutral. They deserve only mild correction, if at all, and are quickly forgotten when an advanced level of speaking proficiency is achieved. Of course, there are limits to indulgence here. Sentence (99) requires of the reader a rather high level of linguistic imagination or knowledge of English

(and the intuitive understanding that this knowledge should be utilized) to be deciphered.

In conclusion, we would like to briefly discuss sources of error. We can differentiate as follows:

Sources of Interference Errors

Objective		Subjective
Situative	Linguistic	

Objective sources of error are factors in the learning situation, hence also the teacher's attitude and the structures of the languages involved in the interferences. We offer the following hypotheses:

1. We put aside, because its corroboration is beyond our present research capacity, the thesis that these interferences reflect only random occurrences of a general language-acquisition phenomenon.

2. We do not summarily reject the more concrete thesis that the generally acknowledged rigid forms of English-language instruction at the primary and secondary levels are the source of an equally strong, if ambivalent, fixation on the first foreign language. The strong attraction and/or aversion that many Japanese foreign-language learners (especially the young) bring to English can thus lead to the undesired resulting effect: both motivational patterns and language structures are transferred from the first foreign language to the second. We do not want to speculate further on this thesis here, as we do not have access to germane empirical investigations.

3. The partial similarity of English and German is undoubtedly a very strong source of error at all language levels. This similarity has grown out of three diachronic roots: the Germanic heritage, the Greco-Latin influence on both languages, and the thousand-year history of constant socio-cultural contact amongst the Western- and Central-European language community, especially the French-English-German triangle.

As far as *subjective* sources of error are concerned, we tentatively offer a few conjectures. It is strikingly noticeable that two psychological types of students, amongst others, exhibit an abnormally high number of interferences. One type is the ambitious student of English. His identification with the first target language is so profound that he transfers its rules and structures out of empathy, or alternatively, out of resentment toward the second target language. The chances of successful therapy are dubious: above all, they are dependent on whether the student is really convinced (or can be convinced) that he needs a second foreign language, in addition to English.

The second psychological type is the student who, out of latently—or obviously—

nationalistic motives, forms an aversion to foreign languages. The motives range from intelligent, rationally argued nationalism to timid authoritarianism, in which he thinks of his country as an extended family beyond whose comfortable fold a cold, hostile or overly-complicated world lurks. Foreign languages represent for him the forbidding chaos from overseas. The inner battle to learn the first foreign language crystalizes in very tenacious fixations on English, the "aggressor". The objects of these fixations—the rules and structures of English—are directed on the second foreign language.

Yet the chances of successful therapy are better than one suspects. They ultimately depend on the attitude of the teacher. If he shows a positive attitude to the students, especially in the form of patience, tact, friendliness, humor, and general attentiveness, the above-mentioned authoritarianism has a beneficial effect. The student gets in step with the teacher, even in the disliked foreign language.