

Open Learning  
Translation Department

Fourth Year  
First Term

# Comparative Linguistics

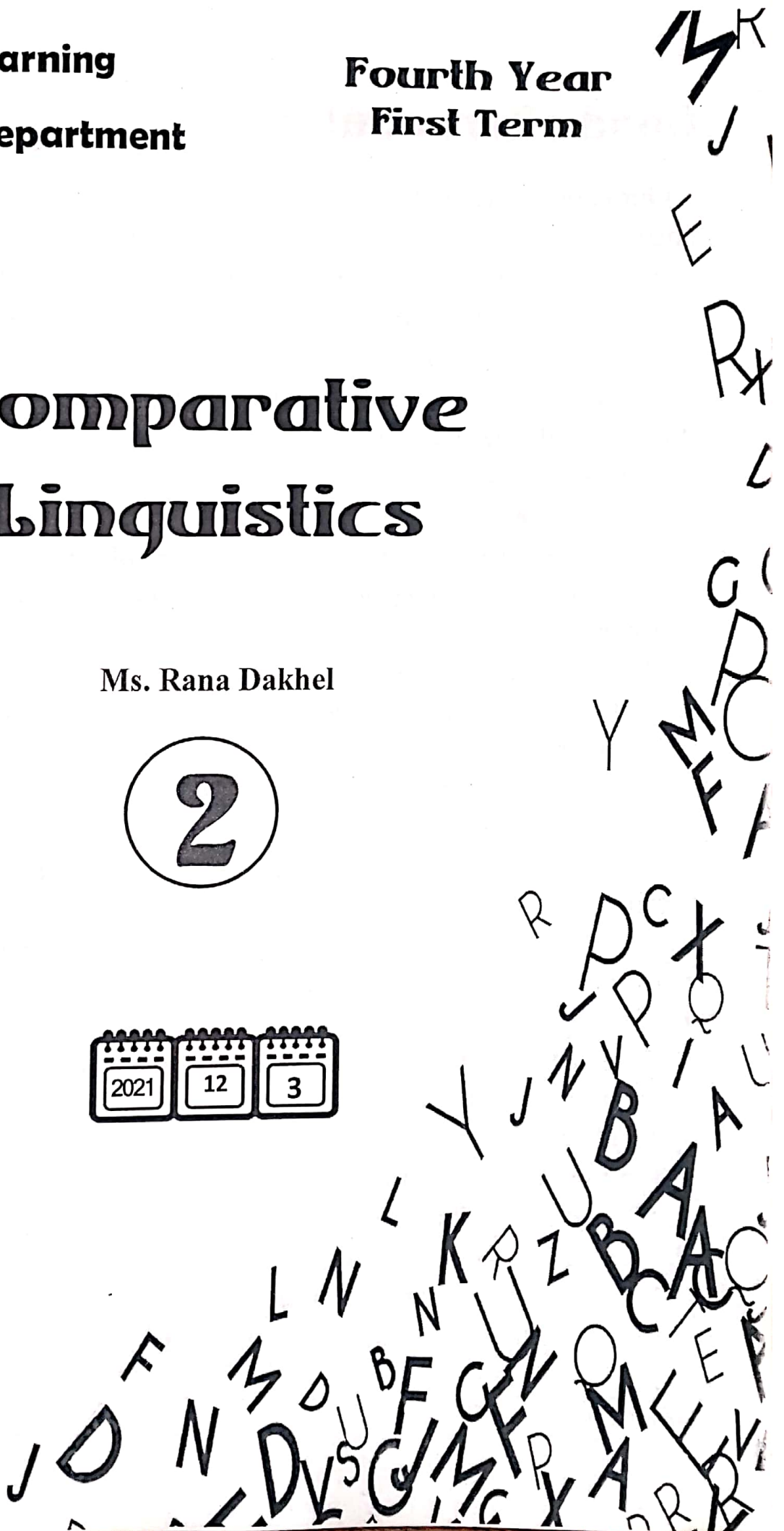
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مؤسسة الأنوار التعليمية

Let's study!  
English



# Good afternoon!

Our course is related to comparative linguistics. We have contrastive linguistics and comparative linguistics. Comparative linguistics is concerned about similarities and differences between languages; contrastive linguistics is only concerned about differences.

Arabic is our mother tongue, first language, source, or native language. English for us is a foreign or a target language; we cannot say it is a second language in Syria.

We, as translators, should be familiar with both languages because we sometimes use the source language to transfer into target language.

Sometimes, when I want to take advantage of my source language, I can translate depending on my mother tongue; we call this **positive transfer**.

We have similar features between English and Arabic; so, I can take advantage of those features and use it for my target language, English.

If it is a **negative transfer**, what do we mean by it?

There are differences between Arabic and English; when I want to convey or to use some features of my Arabic into English, this can make problems and errors, and that is why we call it **negative transfer** or **interference**.

When I talk about interference, I am talking about problems because there are different features between English and Arabic. Can you give me examples?

**Students:** the structure of the sentence, the order of the words, the pronunciation of some letters

**Teacher:** Yes, in Arabic we start with the verb and then the subject, but in English we start with the subject.

We also have the adjective before the noun in English, but in Arabic, the adjective follows the noun.

Also, in English we have /b/ and /p/ but in Arabic, we only have ب.

So, we see these problems that learners and translators face.

Last lecture, we talked about errors and mistakes. What is the difference between an error and a mistake?

Errors are related to competence.

Mistakes are related to performance.

What is the meaning of 'competence' and 'performance'?

**Student:** competence is related to the knowledge of the language; performance is related to the act.

**Teacher:** Yes, excellent. Performance is how I actually use this language; how I exploit my knowledge of language to perform.

For example, a student knows that there is a difference between /b/ and /p/; yet, today he pronounce /p/ as /b/, and tomorrow he did the same thing. What is this mistake related to? Performance

S/he knows that there is a difference but commit the mistake maybe out of being nervous or tired. So, performance is related to factors that sometimes affect our ability to perform the language. If it was competence, then there is a problem in the knowledge; s/he does not know there is a difference between /p/ and /b/.

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Now, we will talk about types of errors. We have:

- Local Errors**
- Global Errors**

**Student:** Global errors are those that happen all over the world.

**Teacher:** Can you give me an example?

**Global errors** actually hinder the communication; I cannot understand you. For example, instead of saying:

*My friend gave me a present.*

You say:

*Friend my present gave.*

You cannot understand it because it is a global error.

**Local errors** do not hinder the communication; I can still understand you even if you commit a mistake. For example:

*My friend gives me a present every year.*

*My friend give me a present every year.*

There is a mistake, but I understand what you said. This is related to local errors, like subject-verb agreement, pluralisation, verb infections, etc. those things do not hinder the communication.

The most important example of global errors is word order; another thing is punctuation in writing. Some students do not use punctuation at all, and some of them keep using commas with no full stops at all. I faced this problem a lot while teaching and grading essay subject papers.

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Now we move to **Error Analyzing:**

We mentioned before that there are four steps for error analyzing.

### **1. Identify errors:**

In the exam, you will have a sentence with some underlined words; you need to identify the error within this sentence.

### **2. Classifying errors:**

Lexical (spelling mistakes), syntactic (ex. Word order), morphologic (word formation), semantic, etc. so, you need to identify the kind of this error.

*The clock is twelve.*

It is wrong to say that; you say: *it is twelve*. It is a lexical and a local error.

### **3. Explaining errors:**

We have causes for errors; what are the reasons for committing a mistake?

### **4. Evaluating errors:**

Is it a global or a local error?

In the exam, you will face practical questions about identifying, classifying, explaining, and evaluating. I think all of them are easy, but only identifying errors is the most challenging question.

The exam is automated, but this term is going to be more difficult than the previous one. I want to check your level of knowledge; your competence.

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We will start talking now about reasons for committing errors. We have to main sources of committing errors.

- ❖ **Negative Transfer, (Interference), or (Inter-lingual)**
- ❖ **Intra-lingual (Developmental) errors**

We have an idea about the negative transfer. So, let us talk about the intra-lingual. It is related to the difficulties of the target language itself.

Let us talk about factors or the reasons for intra-lingual or developmental errors. What are those factors?

### 1. Simplification

Most Arabs, who are learners for English as a second language, avoid using present perfect or progressive; they usually use present simple because they try to use simple forms. We call this factor: simplification.

**Note: negative transfer is related to the speaker; intra-lingual errors are related to the language itself.**

### 2. Overgeneralization

Let us say that I learned something about forming past tense; for example, I learned that I should add -ed to verbs to make simple past.

*I played football yesterday.*

So, after learning the verb /play/, I see the verb /go/ and say: I goed.

Here, this is what we call overgeneralization.

**Student:** it is like assuming it works every time.

**Teacher:** Yes, it is like extending this rule on all verbs.

### 3. Avoidance

From the name, you avoid something 😊

**Student:** Is it like when I am writing an essay, and I want to write a word but I forget it, so I avoid writing altogether.

**Teacher:** Good example. This is in terms of lexical factors. Talking about passive voice, we all try to avoid using it. This is avoidance; maybe my competence is not enough for me to use passive voice correctly.

It is not close to simplification, where I use present simple to simplify my speaking. Here, I avoid using passive voice at all.

**Student:** Do not we avoid using it in order to avoid making errors?

**Teacher:** Yes, but when you write something where you need to use the passive voice and you do not, this is committing an error.

Same goes when you use simple present when you should use perfect or progressive tense.

Also, when you avoid using punctuation, this is related to your competence and your lack of knowledge to use them properly. 😊

**Note:** in the exam, I will give you 90 minutes. Do not accept less than that.

#### 4. Communication Based Errors

Now, do you think all errors can be attributed only to students and nothing on teachers? Teachers are also blamed. Some teachers have problems in teaching techniques.

**Student:** Some teachers make things harder to understand and use even more complicated language to explain some ideas.

**Teacher:** Excellent. This is what we call communication based errors; some teachers while talking about some topics use technical terms and advanced structures, and you end up understanding nothing.

A teacher should explain the terms and try to simplify the structures, and not just keeps on talking and giving no good to the student's competence.

#### 5. Hypercorrection

Another example about teachers: I am teaching you today about pluralisation, for example, and we have finished. I wanted to make a student participate, and I asked her/him a question. While s/he was

talking, I only focused on one spelling mistake s/he made, and I only kept on correcting this mistake for her/him. What happens here? I make the student and myself focus only at the spelling and forget all about the main rule.

**Note:** the level of question in the exam is not more nor less than intermediate. It includes students who work hard and students who do not. That is because you are four-year students.

## 6. Fossilization

Let us say that I have a problem in learning a certain rule. With the passage of time, what happens? It is fixed and I cannot change it. We call this phenomena fossilization.

Like when some students keep reading /the/ as /za/.

## 7. False Concept Hypothesized

**Student:** It is when some student assume something when it is actually wrong.

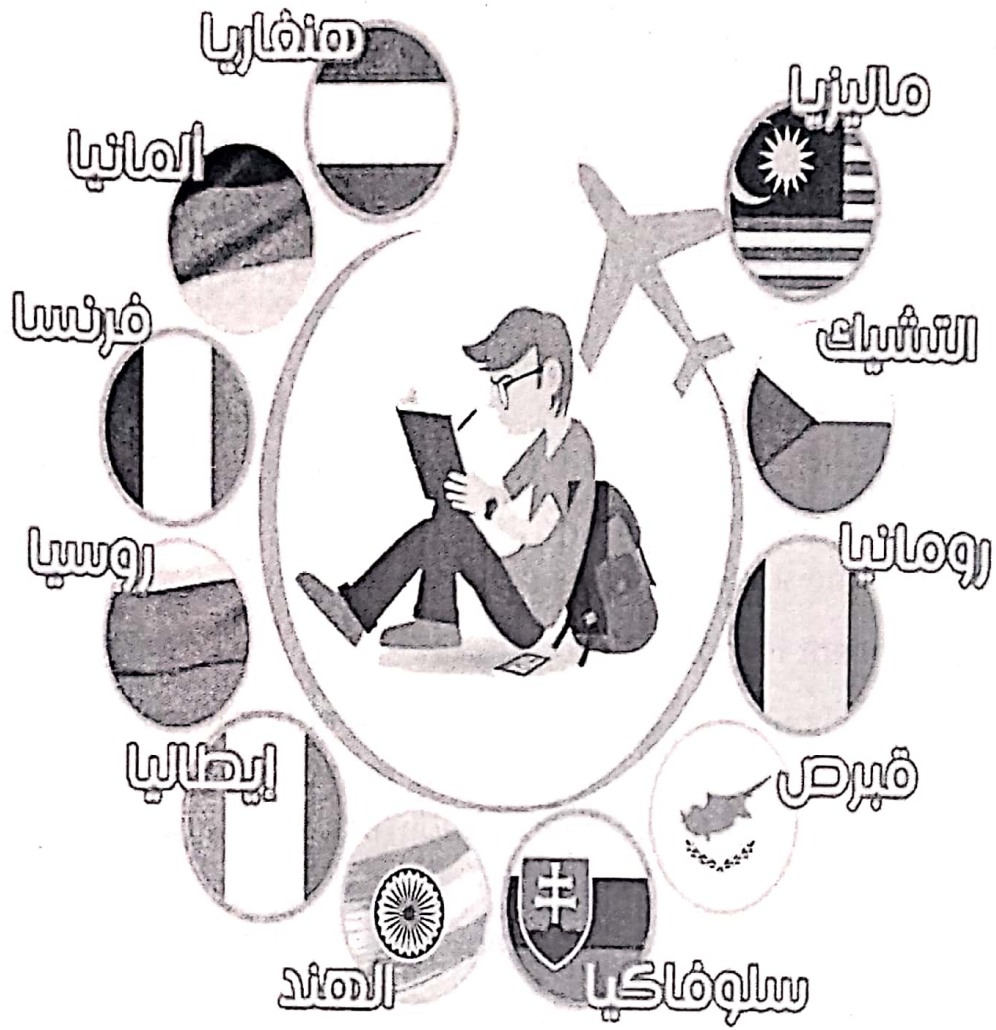
**Teacher:** Excellent. For example, I know that the marker is used for presenters.

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**Thank you very much!**

**See you next week**





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