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L1 Morphosyntactic Interference in English L2 Learning: A Case Study of Kusaal Junior High School Students in Bawku Municipality and Pusiga District in Northern Ghana

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Abstract
This is a qualitative study aimed at finding morphological and syntactic interference of Kusaal L1 in English L2 learning among students from eight junior high schools in Bawku Municipality and Pusiga District in the Upper East Region of Northern Ghana using Contrastive Rhetoric Theory and Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis. The study used recordings of students' discussions and essay scripts of 80 basic nine (9) students. The schools and the participants were purposively selected. The data were analyzed using the content analysis approach. The study reveals that the morphological interference in the students' writing and speech were due to tenses in verbs like came for come and blew for blow. There were syntactic interferences in the pronominal structure such as; pronominal gender interference; she for he, nominative and accusative pronominal interference; he for him, they for them and interference in possessive pronouns. The structure of compound subjects and approximation were also areas of syntactic interference. The study found that, due to the differences in the morphological system and the syntactic structure between Kusaal and English, junior high students of Kusaal background transfer their L1 morphological and syntactic structure to the English Language. The study further suggested the following implication of the findings for teaching and learning. English teachers should acquire basic knowledge of the L1 grammar of their students and have adequate knowledge of how to identify the sources of students' writing errors.

Keywords: *Contrastive Rhetoric Theory, morphological interference, syntactic interference*

Introduction

English Language has since independence of Ghana remains a core subject from class one to senior high school and a programme of study in universities in Ghana. It has been used as a medium of instruction in the basic level alongside Major Ghanaian Languages. English Language is exclusively used as the medium of instruction in senior high schools and tertiary institutions in Ghana (OwuEwie, 2006). Ability to write and speak good English is not only advantageous in communication and commerce, but also a requirement in educational [2]advancement in Ghana. The West African Examination Council has over the years reported poor performance of candidates in both Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and West African Senior School Certificate Examination Council WASSCE English papers. For

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instance, the chief examiner's report on English Language for 2024 WASSCE reveals subject verb agreement errors and incorrect pronoun usage as part of candidate weaknesses. A lot of studies conducted on the causes of this phenomenon have adduced a number of factors. Commonly cited causes by many researchers in the area of Second Language and Applied Linguistics is first language (L1) interference in the learning of English Language (Owu-Ewie & Williams, 2017; Owu-Ewie and Lomotey, 2016). Owu-Ewie and Lomotey (2016) conduct a study on L1 interference in L2 learning among Akan speaking junior high students in Southern Ghana. They establish L1 induced spelling errors, wrong pronoun usage, transliteration and omission errors as sources of L1 interferences in L2 learning. These errors are not peculiar to only Akan speaking areas. English teachers in Kusaug encounter these errors in their students' English essays as well as spoken English. However, there is no study in Kusaal that examines how L1 interferes in L2 learning, hence, this study aims at Identify morphological interference of Kusaal L1 in English L2 learning, syntactic interference of Kusaal Language in the learning of the Syntax in English and Suggest some pedagogical implication for teaching English as a second Language.

Errors in L2 learning from L1 interference arise when a linguistic item in the L2 is missing in the learners' L1. When this occurs, the L1 learner of L2 inherently transfer the similar linguistic item in the L1 to the target language L2 resulting into errors in the target language (Camilleri, 2004). These are in relation to direct translation, the difference in grammatical characteristics between L1 and L2, and the transfer of the L1 system in L2 writing.

Background to the Study

Kusaas are found in the north-eastern corner in the Upper East Region of Ghana. They are the indigenous inhabitants of the six administrative districts called Kusaug. These districts are; Bawku Municipal, Bawku West, Garu, Pusiga, Binduri and Tempane Districts. The people are called Kusaa or Kusaas for singular and plural respectively. These names are often Anglicized as Kusasi or Kusasis by earlier writers. The language is Kusaal. Kusaal has two dialects; Agɔl (Agoli/Agole) Dialect and Atuon (Atuonde) Dialect. For this study, Kusaas and Kusaal are used for the people and the language respectively. Kusaal is one of the Mabia Languages speaking predominantly in Northern Ghana and is intelligible with Dagbani, Farefare, Nabt, Tanl, Buli, Dagaare among others in Northern Ghana.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Contrastive Rhetoric Theory by Robert Kaplan and Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis by Robert Lado. Robert Kaplan, a linguist introduced his research in the 1960s. His research on Contrastive Rhetoric pioneered the notion that cultural and linguistic differences have influence in the writing of English as second language (ESL). Contrastive Rhetoric Theory explains how a person's L1 (first language) and culture influence his or her writing in L2 (second language). Connor (2002) explains that Kaplan (1966) which is regarded as the formal contrastive rhetoric theory states that languages are uniquely characterized by idiosyncratic rhetorical conventions influencing the process of writing composition and consequently, interfered with L2 writing. Kaplan's contrastive rhetoric holds the view that language and writing are cultural phenomena and that linguistic and rhetorical conventions of the first language interfering with writing in the second language is obvious. Therefore, Contrastive Rhetoric is a field of study in second language acquisition that identifies errors in composition faced by second language learners that is traceable to the first language (Connor, 2002). Kusaal junior high school students learning English as a second language, have the influence of their first language (Kusaal) in the writing or spoken system in English Language. These influences are traceable to the differences in the linguistic systems in the two languages. Kusaal and English Language differ remarkably in their Phonemic composition, phonological process, morphological and the syntactic structure.

Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH), was introduced by Robert Lado in his book entitled Linguistics Across Cultures in 1957. Lado states that a learner's first language (L1) dictates their success in acquiring a second language (L2). Similarities between languages create positive transfer, whereas structural differences lead to interference, causing learning difficulties and errors in the target language. The morphosyntactic structure of Kusaal differs substantially from that of English Language. These differences interfere remarkably in the acquisition of English

by Kusaal L1 background learners. This study analyses the morphosyntactic difference between Kusaal and English and how these differences interfere in the learning of English as a second language.

Literature Review

A recurring finding in EFL writing research across different Asian contexts is that L1 interference constitutes a significant and measurable source of learner error. Ehsanzadeh and Dehnad (2024), working with Korean medical students' formal and informal English essay compositions, found that approximately one quarter of all errors were traceable to L1 transfer, attributing this specifically to systemic syntactic differences between Korean and English. This observation is consistent with earlier findings by Yin and Ung (2001), whose analysis of 50 written essays by low-proficiency Bahasa Melayu EFL learners revealed an even higher proportion, with roughly half of all errors originating from the learners' L1. Together, these studies establish that the magnitude of L1 interference is not uniform but tends to vary with learner proficiency, a point Yin and Ung make explicit in linking overreliance on the mother tongue to limited command of the target language.

Beyond establishing the prevalence of L1 interference, the literature also converges on its qualitative character, showing that interference manifests at both grammatical and lexical levels. Yin and Ung (2001) catalogued a notably wide range of error types including inappropriate tense use, omission or misuse of articles, adjective morphology errors, literal translation, language switching, and coined words. This suggests that low proficiency creates broad vulnerability across multiple subsystems of English. This accession is shared by studies on Ghanaian languages like Akan (Owu-ewie & Lomotey, 2016: Owu-ewie & Williams , 2017). Jenwitheesuk (2009), examining written work by third-year Thai college students, corroborates the grammatical dimension of this pattern, identifying determiners, subject-verb agreement, prepositions, and tense as the most persistent problem areas. Significantly, Jenwitheesuk frames these recurring errors not merely as isolated mistakes but as the product of limited syntactic and lexical competence in the target language, which induces learners to fall back on L1 structures. This framing aligns with Lee's (2020) syntactic explanation and reinforces the view, shared across all three studies, that persistent writing errors in EFL contexts are structurally motivated rather than random.

Taken together, these studies point to a consistent mechanism. Where learners lack sufficient command of target-language syntax and vocabulary, the L1 functions as a default cognitive resource, producing systematic and predictable interference patterns in written output. The implication for the present study is that identifying such patterns requires attention not only to error frequency but also to the grammatical and lexical subsystems most susceptible to cross-linguistic influence, and to the role that proficiency level plays in moderating the degree of that influence.

Studies on Ghanaian Language relevant to this study such Owu-Ewie and Lomotey (2016) and Owu-Ewie and Williams (2017) on L1 interference in the L2 writing among Akan speakers both affirm that L1 interference in L2 learning constitute a significant part in errors committed by L2 learners.

Morphology of Kusaal

According to Musah, (2010). Studies in Kusaal Language have not established morphological system (either overt or coded) that is inflected on verb stems to show that the event or situation being spoken about happens in the past, present or future as pertain in English. However, different particles are used to mark tenses.

Tense in Kusaal and English

In Kusaal, tense as a category, is not the case as in English Language where verbs have to undergo morphological processes to the stem of the verbs to effect tenses. However, Kusaal has a system of making references to events or situations that occur in the past, present or future time. Various degrees of remoteness pertaining to past time and future time references are used in the language and these are achieved with the use of these particles – *pa, sa, daa* and *da* for variations of the past and by the particle *saa* for future time marking (Musah, 2010).

The perfective form of the verb *sʊ* (bath) which is sʊya the same in example 1 a, b and c below even though, they represent tenses. The distinction elements are the particles preceding them. This is why Musah (2010) put Kusaal verbal systems as inherently aspectual in nature.

Example 1

HODIERNAL PAST (Restricted to only events of today)

a. M pa sʊya [m pa sʊya]
1SG HOD.PST bath.PERF
'I bathed earlier today.'

Fʊ pa sʊya [fʊ pa sʊya]
2SG HOD.PST
'You bathed earlier today.'

Adaam pa sʊya [Adaam pa sʊya]
Name HOD.PST bath.PERF
'Adaam bathed earlier today.'"

RECENT PAST (Refers to only yesterday's events)

b. M sa sʊya [M sa sʊya]
1SG REC.PST bath.PERF
'I bathed yesterday.'

Fʊ sa sʊya [Fʊ sa sʊya]
2SG REC.PST bath.PERF
'You bathed yesterday.'

Adaam sa sʊya [Adaam sa sʊya]
Name REC.PST bath.PERF
'Adaam bathed yesterday.'

REMOTE PAST (Refers to events after yesterday)

c. M daa sʊ [Ndaa sʊ]
1SG REM.PST bath
'I bathed some time ago.'

Fʊ daa sʊ [Fʊ daa sʊ]
2SG REM.PST bath
'You bathed some time ago.'

Adaam daa sʊ [Adaam daa sʊ]
Name REM.PST bath
'Adaam bathed some time ago.' (Musah, 2010 p.132)

However, English has inflectional morphemes to mark tense. Carstairs-McCarthy (2002) explains that a verb lexeme in English has at most five forms. However, most verbs have only four forms. These are the simple present with the 's' inflection, the simple past with the 'ed' inflected, the progressive form with the 'ing' inflection and the perfective form with the 'ed' because the past tense and the perfect (or passive) participle forms are the same in regular verbs in English. In irregular verbs such as eat, bite, write etc., the fifth form which is the 'en' inflected is used for the participle form.

Example 2

a. Third person singular present tense: performs
b. past tense: performed
c. progressive participle: performing
d. perfect or passive participle: performed
e. basic form (used everywhere else): perform (Carstairs-McCarthy, 2002 p.40).

Example 3

a. Simple present tense: eat
b. Progressive participle: eating
c. Past tense: ate
d. Perfect or passive participle: eaten

When learners of English with Kusaal first language background encounters these morphologically inflected tense markers as pertain in English, they transfer their non-inflected structure in Kusaal to English.

Morphological Interference

Morphological interference according to Asti Supriyanto (2013) is when the construction of a word in one language (L2) absorbs the affixes (morphemes) of another language (L1). This happens when the construction of a word in the target language is being influenced by the morphological process of the first or native language. According to Muziatun et al., (2020), there are six different aspects to consider while doing an analysis of a student's interference in morphology. These aspects include the following: indefinite article, possessive, plural marker, simple past, past participle, and comparative adjective/adverb.

Owu-Ewie and Lomotey (2016) conducted a study on Junior High School Students of Akan speaking background. Their data were collected from students' written essays. Their findings saw both grammatical and lexical errors which include transliteration, omissions, wrong use of words, L1 induced spelling errors, and wrong pronoun uses. Transliteration and omission errors were identified as the most frequently committed L1 interference errors in the writings of Akan L1 learners of English among the Junior High School students. The study noted that some grammatical and lexical errors in students' L2 writing emanated from their L1.

Example 4

a. Our school has grown well in two years.
(Our school has developed well in two years.)
b. Our sport prefect has got 16 years old.
(Our sport prefect is 16 years old.) (Owu-Ewie & Williams, 2017 p. 476).

Owu-Ewie and Williams (2017) argue that the choice of the verbs grown in 6a and has got in 6b are influenced by the speakers' L1 background. Therefore, the grammatical errors in 6a and 6b above are L1 induced morphological errors in L2 acquisition.

Example 5

a. The men in the group were happy that we have internet to use to study.
(The men in the group were happy that we have internet to use to study.)
b. The peoples in our team played very well.
(The people in our team played very well). (Owu-Ewie & Williams, 2017).

The grammatical errors in 7a and 7b above originate from the speakers' previous knowledge on plurality. The study concluded that some of the grammatical and lexical errors university students make in their L2 writings such as concord errors, wrong register, wrong tense, wrong use of words, wrong collocation, ambiguity, punctuation errors, and wrong idiomatic expression use are L1 influence.

Syntactic Interference

Syntactics Interference is where the syntax of the first language interferes in the learning of the syntax of the second language which is also known as grammatical errors (Owu-Ewie & Williams, 2017). Camilleri (2004) conducts a study on Maltese learners of English. A hundred selected participants' essays were used. The results show that students' errors cut across both major and minor parts of speech namely, nouns, adverbs, verbs, adjectives, verb forms, prepositions and articles, spelling, idioms and pronouns. He observes that the main reasons for the errors found were L1 interference. These were in relation to direct translation, the difference in grammatical characteristics between L1 and L2, and the transfer of the L1 system in L2 writing.

Similar to Camilleri (2004) is Lee's (2020). He reveals that Korean learners who studied English as foreign language, also had errors in their English writing outcomes caused by L1 interference. His study was conducted on medical students' English essays compositions both in the formal and informal contexts. He notes that one fourth of the errors committed by the students were from L1 transfer.

Jenwitheesuk (2009) also studied the L2 writing errors causes in third year college student written works. The main sources of errors were lack of syntactic knowledge on the target language. The most common mistakes found were determinants, subject verb agreement, prepositions and tenses. The limited grammatical and lexical competence was identified as the cause which was explained, that the learner relied on the first language and transferred them into L2 writing. He concludes that the persisted errors in writing were resulted from the mother tongue interference.

Nasuk (2016) reveals that there was rarely any point of convergence between the syntactic structure of a number of indigenous Nigerian languages and the English language. He argues that the evidence is not only at morpho - phonemic level but also at the general componential analysis of the sentence in terms of its subject predicate structure. He cited problems of over generalization, and direct one- to- one translation from L1 to L2. For example, the popular Nigerian expression 'I'm coming' which is a direct translation '*Ina zuwa'* (Hausa) is used to mean 'just a minute' or 'I will be right back (Nasuk, 2016). Nasuk further argues that the arrangement influences the English speech of most L2 learners. For instance, the structures that contain a compound subject pose a problem of ordering. In the indigenous languages, the speaker or first person comes before the second or third person. The arrangement influences the English speech of most L2 learners albeit without marring their intended messages.

Example 6

b. I and mercy ate the food.
   Instead of the native speaker's
c. Mercy and I ate the food.

He, however, adds that such arrangements affect the syntactic structure without marring their intended messages.

Other studies from Nattama, (2002) and Hung (2000) affirm L1 interferences in L2 acquisition. Nattama, (2002) reveals that there is L1 lexical interference in L2 writing concerning collocation, plural words, general-meaning, and literal word translation. On his part, Hung (2000) in a study of Thai ESL (English as a Second Language) students found that written English assignments of students were influenced by their L1 grammar structures which include concord, auxiliaries, nouns, determiners, and clause/sentence structure.

Ardiantari, (2021), classifies the syntactic interference based on three levels namely; phrase, clause and sentence. The causes of errors are omission, addition, and mis-formation error. Ardiantari states that the omission error can be found in example 9b below. He argues that 9b is in Indonesian clausal structure. The missing of the auxiliary verb "do" on that sentence affected syntactic structure of English. The addition error can be seen on 9d. The interference is on "…to checking…" on the sentence "I want to checking my healthy". He adds that, based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy, it belongs to addition error. It is characterized by the presence of an item which must not appear in a well-formed utterance in spoken or sentence in written form. On the grammar rule, the verb that is correct to be placed on the sentence is "check". "To" is followed by base verb. He further argues on the phrase level that, on English grammar, the possessive pronoun "my" is followed by noun. On the phrase in 9d, the word "healthy" is an adjective. The adjective "healthy" have to be changed into noun that become "health". So, the correct phrase should be "my health." Therefore, the correct sentence should be (I want to check my health.)

Example 7

a. HA: What's your marital status?

b. P: I married and I have one son. (I am married and I have a son.)
c. HA: Can I help you?
d. P: I want to checking my healthy. (I want to check my health.)

Literal translation is one of the interlanguage factors of the L1 syntactic interference in the learning of the target language. Instead of trying to think in English while writing English, they tend to translate what they had in their first language into English word by word (Marita & Jufrizal, 2020). These literal translations, lead to errors and inefficiency to their English writing. Marita and Jufrizal (2020) claim that they did it because it was easier for them to construct in their language first then translate it into English instead of writing while thinking in English. Students' tendency of causing more errors by using local language structure, abuse and omission of prepositions, auxiliaries, articles, lack of subject-verb agreement, and lexical choice are high. The findings of their study were emphasizing the idea of the interference from native language which was surely the immediate noticeable source of errors in the form of literal translation.

Accusative and Nominative Pronouns in Kusaal

Personal pronouns in Kusaal do not mark gender and case. Unlike languages like English where gender is marked in the 3rd person singular and plural forms e.g., she/he, Kusaal uses ò for both the 3rd person masculine and feminine. Case is equally not an overwhelming characteristic of the pronominal system of Kusaal (Musah, 2018). However, English has different form for both nominative and accusative pronoun. Such *as I, we, they, he* and *she* as nominative with their corresponding accusative pronouns *me, us, them, him* and *her*.

Example 8

Subject	**Object**
M 1SG/ ti 1PL	M 1SG/ ti 1PL
fʊ 2PL/ ya 2PL	fʊ 2PL/ ya 2PL
+HUM o 3SG/ba 3PL	+HUM o 3SG/ba 3PL
-HUM li 3SG/ba3PL	-HUM li 3SG/ba3PL

Possessive Pronouns in Kusaal

Kusaal does not distinguish between the nominative and genitive forms of the pronoun morphologically. To express possession, speakers use the nominative pronouns plus the possessed item as illustrated in example 11. The emphatic nominative pronoun has so far not been cited in genitive use. (Musah, 2018). English on the other hand has mine / ours, yours and his/hers/its/theirs as 1st, 2nd and 3rd person possessive pronouns respectively.

Example 9

a. Ò sáàm
   3SG father
   'his/her father'

b. Bà yá
   3PL house.PL
   'their houses'

Interrogative Sentences in Kusaal

Wh-interrogatives manifest in two forms in Kusaal; exhaustive wh-questions and non-exhaustive wh-questions with each serving specific discourse functions (Abubakar & Bodomo, 2024). While exhaustive wh- questions require the use of the particles ka and nɛ in non-subject focus in both the questions, in example 12 b, the non-exhaustive does not require these particles in their questions, as in 12a. Abubakar and Bodomo (2024) argue that non-marked wh-questions in Kusaal, though inherently focused, lack semantic contrast and exhaustivity. Non-marked wh-questions are always in-situ in Kusaal.

Example 10

a. Ba sa di bɔɔ?
   3PL PST eat what
   What did they eat yesterday?
b. Bɔ ka ba sa díí?
   what FOC 3PL PST eat
   What did they eat yesterday?

a. O di diib la bɔzugɔ
3SG eat.PERF food DEF why
S/he ate the food for what reason?
b. Bɔzug ka o di diib la?
why FOC 3SG eat food DEF
Why did he eat the food?

Research Methodology

The approach to this research is qualitative. This study employed a qualitative design. It is a case study. The study involved eight Junior High Schools in the Upper East Region of Ghana. Four schools are selected from Bawku Municipal and four schools from Pusiga District. The main data were from recordings of students' discussions and students' essay scripts. The Eight Junior High Schools selected for the study are all situated in the outskirt of Bawku municipality and Pusiga District in the Upper East Region of Ghana. The schools are public basic schools. Students in these schools are mostly from the rural areas. The schools' catchment areas are mostly the native Kusaas speaking communities. Students from Kusaal native language background were purposefully sampled. The English teachers in the selected schools did the selection. Ten students from each junior high school were selected. The study used 80 students made up of 40 females and 40 males. The schools and the participants were purposively sampled because they possess the information the researcher needs. The age range of the participants were 14 to 16. Their English proficiency level was relatively low.

Data for this study were taken from eight schools in Bawku Municipality and Pusiga District in two phases. Data for the first phase were collected through recordings on discussions of a story they have read. It is one of the selected literature books for junior high schools in Ghana. A prose entitled "The Dilemma of a Ghost" by Ama Ata Aidoo. A movie of the story was played to the students to watch. The students were put into eight groups with five members each. Each group was assigned a different question from the story. Group one was to discuss the character of Ato and group two was on the character of the old Lady. Group three and four were to discuss the literary devices in the prose and the themes of the story respectively. In all, forty students were involved. Their discussions were recorded and transcribed. In all, two hours and five minutes of discussions were recorded. All the recordings were transcribed. Forty-one pages were realized from the transcription. For ethical reasons, all the participants were briefed before the recordings were done. The headteachers of the selected schools were informed and their approvals were given. The second phase of the data collection process were ten students each from the eight schools who were sampled purposively. The end of year English essay scripts of the students was used. In all, eighty essay scripts were analyzed. The essays were marked by the English teachers of the selected schools based on the marking scheme given by the schools. All these eighty students were part of those who took part in the discussion. The marked scripts were analyzed by the researcher. and another linguist. Errors were categorized based on sources of those errors. Errors emanating from L1 phonetics, L1 phonology, L1 morphology, and L1 syntactic interferences were grouped accordingly. In the analysis, errors relating to phonetics, phonology and errors outside L1 interference were categorized as others while focus was on L1 morphology and L1 syntactic interference. Errors that repeat in the same essay or repeated errors in students' discussions are counted only once. The other rater also holds MPhil in Applied Linguistics. Later, the ratings were reconciled by the researcher. The documents (essays) were analyzed using content analysis.

The students were given three essay topics and each student was expected to write on one of the topics. There were different set of questions for students for Bawku Municipal and Pusiga District. The essay was supposed to be not less than 200 words long. In all there were six essay questions. The questions were:

1. Write an argument for or against the topic; "The disadvantages of mobile phones for students far outweigh its advantages.
2. You have recently participated in an interesting programme. Describe your experiences of this programme to your friend.
3. Write a letter to your friend in another school, telling him/her about a sports competition held in your school recently.
4. Describe the game you like best.

5. Write a story that ends with “so you see, not all that glitters is gold.
6. Write an article for publication in the national newspapers on the causes of land pollution and ways to minimize it.

Research Findings and Analysis

The analysis of the data and discussion of the findings is done thematically based on the research objectives outlined earlier. The analysis was done by categorizing the L1 interferences into L1 morphological interference and L1 syntactic interference. Morphological interference was based on pronominal tenses. The syntactic interference was subcategorized into pronominal interference, subject verb agreement interference. Interference in interrogatve sentences and approximation. The pronominal interference was subdivided into pronominal gender, accusative and nominative pronominal interference and interference in possessive structure. The frequency of the interference was tabulated and converted into percentage. Below are the discussions and responses to the research objectives.

Tense Markers

Verb tense refers to the way a verb is formed to communicate when an action or occurrence takes place. There must be consistency between when the action occurred and the type of verb used. The reality from studies reveal that some English second language learners violate this fundamental tense rule (Owu-Ewie & Williams, 2017). Unlike the inflected verbal form used to mark present, past and aspect in English, Kusaal use different particles to mark future, present, past tense and perfect tense. Whereas, English has morphemes as tense markers attached to the bare form of the verbs’ to mark tenses, Kusaal uses various particles to mark same. So, when English learners of Kusaal encounter verbs in English that have undergone morphological processes to the bare form of the verb, they pronounce the bare form of the verb as exist in their L1. Kusaal has no different verbal forms for agreeing with subjects in the first, second or third person pronouns. Therefore, the errors in extracts 1 to 4 are traceable to the nonmorphological singular/plural verbal markings of those verbs in Kusaal. That is why the participants use He *talk* instead of he talks in 1, Eulalie *Speak* instead of Eulalie speaks in 2, she *don’t* instead of she doesn’t in 3 and the man *have* instead of the man has in 4 below. The choice of verbs *see*, *are* and *surprise* in extract 5 are informed by the lack of morphological tense marking on the verb in Kusaal. Similarly, Owu-Ewie and Williams, (2017) found (32.0%) errors committed by Akan L1 learners of English were tense errors some of which were traceable to L1 syntactic interference.

1. You say he *talk* fast? (Did you say he talks fast?)
2. The other woman, Eulalie *speak* very fast. The other woman, Eulalie speaks very fast.
3. She *don’t* know what to do with the snails. (She doesn’t know what to do with the snails.)
4. The man *have* not agree to his people. (The man has not agreed to his people.)
5. The two womens are gossipers, when they *see* the old woman sitting there, they *are surprise*. (The two women are gossips, when they saw the old woman sitting there, they were surprise.)
6. You are going to say what I *say*? (Were you going to say what I said?)
7. The pure water rubbers *is* making the environment dirty” (Sachet water sacs are making the environment dirty.)
8. The books *is* not up. (The books are not enough.)
9. I *buy* the book. (I bought the book.)
10. I *tell* them but they *refuse* and now they *mark* us wrong.” (I told them but they refused and now they marked us wrong).
11. The first woman and the second woman *think* that the old woman *is* dead. (The first woman and second woman thought that the old woman was dead.)
12. The primary childrens *join* us to celebrate. (The children from the primary school joined us in the celebration).
13. When the referee *end* the game, I and my friends *go* to the common market. (When the referee ended the game, my friends and I went to the common market.)

Kusaal Interference in the English Pronominal Structure

The pronominal structure of Kusaal differs remarkably from English in the area of syntactic arrangements, pronominal gender, accusative/nominative cases and possessive pronouns.

These differences have a carry forward effect on the learning of the syntactic system in the English language.

Compound Subject Arrangements

The head of the nominal phrase in Kusaal is generally composed of a simple noun (singular or plural), a conjoined noun, a compound noun, a possessive (genitive) (Abubakar, 2018). The order of arrangement of constituents in compound subjects in sentences in Kusaal is not strictly governed by any order. However, the 1st person pronoun usually comes first before the other constituents. The order in English however, requires that the 1st person pronoun I comes after the other noun phrase.

Therefore, the phrases 'I and Samiu', instead of Samiu and I, 'I and the class', instead of the class and I and 'I and my friends' instead of my friends and I in the extracts below are in Kusaal syntactic structure. These findings are in line with Nasuk (2016) where native speakers of some key Nigerian languages such as Hausa, Yoruba among others transfer the structure in L1 in compound subjects to English. The sentences 18, 19 and 20 are influenced by the speakers' Kusaal background.

14. I and Samiu said the same thing. (Samiu and I said the same thin.)
15. I and the class didn't agree on one answer. (The class and I didn't agree on one answer)
16. When the referee end the game, I and my friends go to the common market. (When the referee ended the game, my friends and I went to the common market.)

Pronominal Gender Interference of Kusaal in English

As stated earlier, Personal pronouns in Kusaal do not mark gender. Unlike languages like English, where gender is marked in the 3rd person singular and plural forms e.g., she/her and he/him for female and male respectively, Kusaal uses ò for both the 3rd person masculine and feminine (Abubakar, 2018). The choice of masculine possessive pronoun *his* in extract 21 incorrectly used in reference to a feminine pronoun is due to the fact that the Kusaal language does not have gender distinction in pronouns. *Her* and *he* referring to the same noun in extract 23 is due to lack of pronominal gender in Kusaal. The errors in 21, 22 and 23 are as a result of lack of the same pronominal structure in gender in the two languages. Hence, the transfer of Kusaal structure to English. For instance, 21 above, is an acceptable construction in Kusaal because Kusaal Language has no distinction between masculine and feminine possessive pronouns as *o* is used for both. The errors in 22 and 23 above are occasioned by lack of pronominal gender distinction in Kusaal. So, the students transfer whatever 3rd person pronoun they are comfortable with regardless of gender.

17. The elders expect (expected) the girl to offer *his* elder brother a seat that is why *she* shouted at *him*. (The elders expected the girl to offer her elder brother a seat, that was why he (the man) shouted at her).
18. *She* (boy) is inside our group. (He is a member of our group.)
19. I ask her and *he* said *he* is in our group. (I asked her and she said she is a member of this group.)

Accusative and Nominative Pronoun Interference of Kusaal in English

Kusaal L1 learners of English confused where to use the appropriate case in English. In extracts 24 and 25, the 1st person plural subjective pronoun *we* is in the object position in the sentence and should have been the 1st person objective pronoun, *us*. *Me* in extract 26 is an objective pronoun which should not have been used in the subject position. The correct form should have been the first person subjective singular pronoun I. As established by Abubakar (2018) and Musah (2018) case is not a characteristic of the pronominal system of Kusaal. There is no distinction between the accusative pronouns and the nominative pronouns. Students learning English with Kusaal L1 background get confused when they encounter the task of selected appropriate pronominal case in English. Hence, they tend to use subjective pronouns for objective positions as in 24 and 25 and objective pronouns are also used at subjective position in 26 above. So, the errors in 24, 25 and 26 are caused by the learners' L1 interferences.

24. Master, give it to *we* the first group. (Master, give it to us the first group.)
25. They are not giving dustbin to *we* in the rural areas. (They are not distributing dustbins to

us in the rural areas.)

26. *Me* and you are saying different things. (You and I are saying different things.)

Kusaal Possessive Pronoun Interference in English

Possessive pronouns are used in place of nouns to indicate the ownership of something or someone by something or someone else (Caulfield, 2023). English possessive pronouns are; mine, ours, yours, his, hers, theirs, and whose. Kusaal possessive constructions are structured on the personal pronominal forms. All subject forms of the personal pronominal are also used in genitive constructions to signal a possessor possessed entity relation between the speaker and a referred entity (Musah, 2018 p.88). Similar findings from Abubakar (2018) establish that Kusaal does not distinguish between the nominative and genitive forms of the pronoun morphologically. To express possession, speakers use the nominative pronouns plus the possessed item. The sentences structure in 27,28,29 and 30 are well accepted in the syntactic structure in Kusaal. The emphatic nominative pronoun has so far not been cited in genitive use. The construction of 27,28,29 and 30 are influenced by the students' Kusaal L1 syntactic background. These findings conform to Owu-Ewie and Lomotey (2016) on Akan L1 learners of English where wrong pronoun uses were found to be among the L1 induced errors.

27. It is our own. (It is ours.)
28. It is my own. (It is mine.)
29. It is for ours. (It is ours.)
30. That question is them not the last group. (That question is theirs not the last group.)

Kusaal Interference in English Subject Verb Agreement

Subject-verb agreement is the correspondence of a verb with its subject in person (first, second, or third) and number (singular or plural) (Greenbaum & Nelson, 2002). The principle of subject-verb agreement applies to finite verbs in the present tense and, in a limited way, to the past forms of the verb to be (was and were). Noun-pronoun agreement, on the other hand, is the correspondence of a pronoun with its antecedent in number (singular, plural), person (first, second, third), and gender (masculine, feminine, neuter) (Sorenson, 2010). Kusaal does not have number distinction in the verbal system in syntactic construction. In Kusaal syntactic structure, the verb agrees to any noun phrase in the subject position whether singular or plural. Subject verb agreement is not a feature in the syntactic structure in Kusaal. Hence, the verb *was* for the plural subject *their players* instead of were in 31, the verb *come* for the singular subject *rainy season* instead of comes in 32, the verb *is* for the plural subjects *our supporters* instead of are in 34. The verbs used by the students in extracts 35 to 38 are in the bare form. This is informed by the lack of present and past tense inflectional marking in the verbal system in Kusaal. Therefore, the choice of the bare form of the verbs are induced by the learners L1 background. Owu-Ewie and Williams, (2017) confirm these subject verb agreement errors in Akan L1 English L2 learners were (29.8%) errors committed were agreements errors, which they argue L1 interference contribute to some of these errors.

31. Their players *was* playing well at the beginning. (Their players *were* playing well at the beginning.)
32. When rainy season *come*, the gutters will be chocked. (When rainy season *comes*, the gutters will be chocked.)
33. The use of mobile phones *are* good. (The use of mobile phones is good.)
34. Our supporters *is* many than them because it *is* in our school. (Our supporters *were* more than them because it (the match) was played in our school.)
35. When the referee *blow* the whistle to end the match, we *are* all happy. (When the referee blew the whistle for the end of the match, we *were* all happy.)
36. Everyone *like* how the man *show* off his wealth. (Everyone likes how the man *shows* off his wealth.)
37. If the law *say* everybody *are* to keep their environment clean, you cannot wait for government to do it for you. (If the law says everybody *is* to keep their environment clean, you cannot wait for government to do it for you.)

38. Mobile phone *help* us to do our homework. (Mobile phone helps us to do our homework.)

Interrogative Sentences as a Source of L1 Inteterference

Although Kusaal has all the four forms of interrogative sentences as pertain in English namely; yes-no question, tag question, altenative questions and wh-question, as stated by Abubakar and Bodomo (2024), the syntactic structure of the Wh-questions and yes-no question type differ from that of English. In English syntactic structure, the interrogator (Wh/modal auxilliary) comes first. In Kusaal syntactic contruction, the noun phrase comes before the other constituents. Therefore, the interrogative sentences in 39 to 42 are influenced by the learners L1.

39. You say what? (what do you say?)
40. You are sure it is a metaphor? (Are you sure it is a metaphor?)
41. Your answer was what? (What was your answer?)
42. She was talking about what? (What was she talking about?)

Approximation as a Source of Kusaal Interference in English

43. If it is rainy season, you will *hear* the smell from the gutters. (If it is rainy season, one can smell the stink from the gutters.)
44. I *want* to ask my opponent this question that, who is responsible for cleaning the gutters? (May I ask my opponent this question, who is responsible for cleaning the gutters?)
45. His argument is very *sweet*. (His argument is very nice, beautiful, interesting.)

The findings of this study also reveal that students of Kusaal background engage in direct translation of some Kusaal words to English. For instance, Kusaal has only one word for 'to smell, to hear, to feel', which is *wʊm*. The choice of the word *hear* in 39 above is a direct translation from Kusaal word (*wʊm*). Kusaal does not have the exact word for modal auxiliary *may*. So, the choice of *want* in 40 was just an approximation. Similar approximation is found in 41.

These findings corelate remarkably with studies from Asian Languages such as Lee (2020) and more importantly Ghanaian studies on L1 interference on English L2 learners. For instances Owu-Ewie and Lomotey, (2016) found both grammatical and lexical errors which include transliteration, omissions, wrong word use which is classified in this study as approximation, L1 induced spelling errors, and wrong pronoun uses were influence of the learners' L1. They also identified that transliteration and omission errors were the most frequently committed L1 interference errors in the writings of Akan speakers learning English in the Junior High School. The study noted that some grammatical and lexical errors in students' L2 writing emanated from heir L1. Some of these errors Owu-Ewie and Lomotey classified as grammatical and lexical errors are L1 morphosyntactic interference. A total number of one thousand eight hundred and twelve (1,812) errors were detected from students' conversations and essay scripts. Among these 1,174 (64.78%) were induced by their Kusaal morphosyntactic interference. These interferences comprise; Morphological interference of 791 dominants with 43.65% of all the L1 (Kusaal) interference. Areas of morphological interference were tenses. Whereas English uses overt morphological tense markers on the base form of the verb to mark past and plural, Kusaal basically with the exception of the progressive and perfective tense, maintain the base form of verb and use particles to mark present, future, recent past, and distant past (Musah, 2010).

A total of 383 representing 21.13% of L1 interference were syntactic interference. These were pronominal interference (pronominal gender, possessive pronoun, nominative and accusative pronoun), tenses and structure of compound subjects. The analysis above agrees with earlier studies by, Owu-Ewie and Williams (2017) and Owu-Ewie ang Lomotey (2016) that tense errors mostly linked to L1 interference are frequently committed grammatical error among second language learners of English. Also, the findings of the study about agreement as problematic to L2 learners of English is consistent with Marital and Jufrizal (2020), Owu-Ewie and Williams (2017) and Jenwitheesuk (2009). Additionally, findings relating to compound subjects agree to

Nasuk (2016) where they establish that compound subjects ordering was an area of L1 interference among Hausa and Yoruba L2 learners of English.

Table 1: Native Language Interference

Source of Interference	Number	Percentage
Syntactic	383	21.13
Morphological	791	43.65
Others	638	21.13
Total	1,812	100

Recommendation to Improve the Teaching and Learning of English

Owu-Ewie and Williams (2017) recommended that since some of the errors committed by second language learners were as a result of students' transferring their grammatical or lexical knowledge from their L1, English language teachers at the JHS level, where possible, should have an understanding of both the L1 and L2 of the students and explicitly teach for transfer. The findings of the study have implications for the teaching and learning of English Language in the Junior High Schools in Kusaug. The following are some recommendations: English language teachers in Kusaug should try as much as possible to acquire basic knowledge of Kusaal Grammar. Also, English teachers should put much interest in identifying the sources of their student errors in English writing and use effective teaching strategies to treat them.

Conclusion

The study sought to identify the morphological and syntactics interferences of Kusaal L1 in English L2 learning. Errors that occur as a result of Kusaal L1 interference in the English L2 learning in the area of morphology are tenses. Syntactics errors committed by Junior High School students in Bawku Municipal and Pusiga District traceable to L1 interferences were; pronominal structure (pronominal gender, pronominal case and possessive pronoun), subject verb agreement, order of the noun phrases in compound subjects, interrogative sentences and approximation. This study has only looked at the morphosyntax aspect of L1 interference in L2 learning. Further studies are therefore required to examine phonetics and phonological interference of Kusaal L1 in English L2 learning.

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