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AN ANALYSIS OF Sɔ̀gɔ̀kiré SPEAKERS' VERB ELEMENT ERRORS IN ENGLISH

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Abstract

This study focuses on global errors related to the verb elements made by Sɔ̀gɔ̀kiré native speakers in written English. The verb elements constitute a difficulty for these learners, preventing them from becoming proficient in written English. To improve Sɔ̀gɔ̀kiré native speakers' writing in English, a qualitative and quantitative methodology was adopted, using tests to gather the data from 50 participants. We employed Rod Ellis' (1994) error analysis framework to reach our objectives. The findings of the study reveal that Sɔ̀gɔ̀kiré native speakers are confronted with global errors such as main verb errors and helping verb errors. Additionally, the results show that helping verb errors are the most prominent of the two error types. Finally, the results show that the participants' global errors are due to both intralingual errors and the interference of the mother tongue and the intermediary language. Based on the findings, some pedagogical implications for teaching and learning the English verb elements are suggested.

Key-words: English, French, global errors, Sɔ̀gɔ̀kiré, verb elements

Une Analyse des Erreurs des éléments Verbaux des Locuteurs Sɔ̀gɔ̀kiré en Anglais

Résumé

Cette étude traite des erreurs globales liées aux éléments verbaux commises par les locuteurs sɔ̀gɔ̀kirés dans les productions écrites en anglais. Le system verbal constitue une difficulté pour ces apprenants, leur empêchant de bien maîtriser l'anglais écrit. Pour améliorer la production écrite des locuteurs sɔ̀gɔ̀kirés en anglais, une méthodologie qualitative a été déployée, utilisant des devoirs pour recueillir les données chez 50 participants. Nous avons employé le cadre théorique de l'analyse des erreurs de Ellis (1994) pour atteindre notre objectif. Les résultats révèlent que les locuteurs sɔ̀gɔ̀kirés sont confrontés à des erreurs globales telles que les verbes et leurs auxiliaires. En plus, les résultats montrent que les auxiliaires constituent les erreurs prédominantes parmi les deux types d'erreurs. Enfin, les résultats montrent que les erreurs globales de participants sont dues à des erreurs *intralinguales* et à l'interférence de la langue maternelle et de la langue intermédiaire. En se basant sur les résultats, des implications pédagogiques pour l'enseignement et apprentissage des éléments verbaux de l'anglais ont été suggérées.

Mots-clés : anglais, éléments verbaux, erreurs globales, français, sɔ̀gɔ̀kiré.

INTRODUCTION

English language plays an important role in the world. In the context of Burkina Faso, it is learned in schools as a foreign language and considered as a working language and language of administration (loi constitutionnelle n°045-2023/ALT du 30 décembre 2023 portant révision de la Constitution)¹. It is often learnt after learners have developed a competence both in their mother tongue and French. In the learning process, one of the most important aspects that students must master in English is its verb elements, which are said to be one of the most difficult grammatical areas for learners (Amara Aulia Putri *et al.*, 2023). Therefore, as Gérard Millogo (2024) argues, teaching any language depends on its verb elements.

Burkinabe students in 3e are expected to acquire full competence in writing in English in the different linguistic aspects in which they have been taught throughout their Junior secondary school (circulaire N° 105/MENAC/ICEDSD de décembre 1. 1983)². One of these aspects includes the verb elements, their different tenses and aspects which require the students' competence. However, Burkinabe students, particularly native speakers of Sogokiré, have difficulties in writing in English (Hywel Coleman *et al.*, 2013; Millogo, 2024). This is due to differences in structures between English and Sogokiré in grammar (Millogo, 2024). Errors can occur due to these differences and other learning difficulties. Among these errors, in the literature, verb errors are said to be problematic for learners of English as a foreign language. According to Gérard Millogo (2020), among the different error categories that Burkinabe learners are confronted with, verb element errors are the most frequent and serious ones. The decision about which errors are global among errors related to the verb elements is unidentified specially when it comes to Sogokiré speakers' verb errors. The prominence of verb errors can lead to the low performance of Sogokiré native speakers in English in 3e classes, which can prevent them from acquiring the language effectively (Millogo, 2024). The verb errors are one of the aspects in written English that can substantiate the failure of 3e students in the national examination (Coleman *et al.*, 2013).

Based on the assumption that differences between English verb elements and Sogokiré ones can cause errors, this study suggest that one reasonable way to deal with learners' errors is to combine Contrastive Analysis with Error Analysis to efficiently deal with these errors. The

¹ Free translation of "Constitutional Law No. 045-2023/ALT of December 30, 2023 on the revision of the Constitution" in Burkina Faso

² Free translation of "Circular Letter No. 105/MENAC/ICEDSD of December 1, 1983" on the objectives of teaching foreign languages in Burkina Faso.

present study on Error Analysis builds on Millogo (2024), which has already described the Sogokiré verb elements and compared them to the English ones.

The study purports to shed light on the cause of global errors in the English verb elements encountered by Sogokiré speakers in Burkina Faso Junior Secondary schools, and contribute to improve their English language writing skill.

The general objective of the study is to analyse Sogokiré speakers' verb related errors in learning English in 3e schools in view of improving their written communication. Specific objectives include the (1) identification of Sogokiré speakers' global verb errors, (2) the quantification of these errors, and (3) the explanation of these global errors.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies have been conducted on verb errors in writing. One thing that all these researchers agree on is that verb element errors are the most prominent ones among the different grammatical categories which are due to both interlingual and intralingual errors. A study conducted by Imelda Gozali (2018) on local and global errors on Indonesian students oral English discusses the predominance of verb errors. The results of the study show that the students made both global and local errors in spoken English, which causes were both interlingual and intralingual.

Unlike Gozali (2018), Aref Ali Addaibani's (2017) study focusing on the acquisition of wh-questions by EFL students mentions the predominance of interlingual errors. The findings also reveal that auxiliary errors are the most prominent errors among all the error types. These errors are due to interlingual and intralingual errors, where the mother tongue was the only interference among interlingual errors.

Another study by Ghiyath Al-Sheikh Ibrahim (2023) on verb errors in writing by First-Year English Students reveals that the students made verb errors, which are mainly due to intralingual errors, 75% compared to 25% of interlingual errors. In the same vein, Deniz Karan (2016) deals with syntax errors made by Turkish learners in their written productions in French as a third language (L3), mentioning the predominance of interlingual errors due to the interference of L1 and L2. The findings of the study also reveal that the student errors were due to intralingual errors, i.e., the strategies used by the learners to avoid the complexity of the target language.

Like Karan (2016), Gérard Millogo's (2020) study on syntactic errors in interrogative sentences among 4e secondary students at Sainte Famille school in Burkina Faso highlights the predominance of interlingual errors, due to interference of Mooré, the students' mother tongue

(L1) and French as their intermediary language (L2). The findings also reveal that the global errors mainly concern the verb system, i.e., verb and auxiliary errors. The findings finally acknowledge intralingual errors as being one of the participants' error causes. Missiri Sawadogo (2020), on the other hand, examines students' errors in writing among secondary school in Kaya in Burkina Faso. The findings of the study show that the students made many verb errors, which were only due to the interference of the intermediary language (French). The solely attribution of interlingual causes to the intermediary language may be because the researcher does not consider the mother tongue criterion when selecting his participants.

Based on the foregoing literature review, no study has been conducted on Sogokiré global errors related to the verb elements in written English production. It is on this premise that the present study seeks to examine these errors among Sogokiré speakers.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study deploys the Error Analysis framework by Rod Ellis (1994), including collection of samples of language, identification of errors, descriptions of errors, explanation of errors, and evaluation of errors. The identification consists of comparing the learners' productions to the expected ones. At this level, we did not make the difference between an error and a mistake. The next step on the description of errors concerns the taxonomy of errors. In the present study, the taxonomy of errors concerns the errors occurring in the verb elements. We mean by verb elements, the errors related to the main verb and helping verbs, i.e., auxiliaries. At this level, the errors are first classified in categories and subcategories (addition, omission, substitution, and miss-ordering) and then quantified.

As for the explanation of errors, the learners' productions are compared to the learners' previous acquired/learned languages to determine interlingual errors as they "are only one of the types of errors found in the syntax, morphology and lexicon of student speech and writing in the target language" (Burt, 1975: 54). The evaluation of errors is the final step, and it consisted in judging the errors in terms of their seriousness. We classified serious errors as global errors. Marina K. Burt (1975: 56) defines global errors as "errors that significantly hinder communication" and these errors "affect overall sentence organization". In the present study, we consider global errors to be those that impair communication by affecting the overall sentence organisation.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design and Participants

This study employs a mixed method. It is both qualitative and quantitative. It mainly provides an in-depth description of Sogokiré native speakers' performance in English through two written tests. This description is based on the collection of production in the form of sentences to study the student verb element errors. The data were collected from 50 Sogokiré native speakers learning English as a foreign language in Burkina Faso in 3e classes in Junior Secondary Schools in the commune of Satiri, within five days from 11 to 15 May 2026. The participants were purposively selected. That is, they were chosen on the basis of their knowledge of their mother tongue (Sogokiré). We selected Sogokiré native speakers who use Sogokiré as their home language and for daily communication. In addition, we selected the participants from the 3e classes who were willing to take part in the study. The sample comprised 30 boys and 20 girls, aged 15 to 17.

3.2. Research Instruments

The instruments of the research include two (02) tests and a socio-demographic questionnaire. The first test was about sentences in the present tense aspects and the second test dealt with the past tense aspects and future aspects.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

To collect the data, we first administered the socio-demographic questionnaire in view of identifying and selecting the participants. After selecting the participants, we proceeded by administering the two tests, starting first by the first test. Each test has been done by the students in one (01) hour. We administered the tests separately, i.e., the first one in the morning and the second one in the afternoon while taking into account their availability and their willingness to participate in the study. The participants' papers were anonymous and they were informed that their inputs will be confidential.

The data analysis follows Ellis' (1994) procedure of Error Analysis. We use content analysis which is a "technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages" (Holsti, 1968 cited in Fundano and Fortes, 2025: 2728). We used deductive analysis to extract the different aspects related to errors in the verb system. The learners' productions (LP) were presented followed by the expected production (EP) in order to find out easily the different errors. As for the global errors, we

considered errors that prevent communication. In the analysis, we use symbols like (*) for erroneous sentences, (X) for omissions, and (□) for both substitutions and additions. Additionally, all the errors are put in bold in the sample of sentences presented. The types of global errors related to verb system and their quantification are tabulated using Excel 2007.

4. RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the research on global verb errors in Sogokiré native speakers' written production in English. The results are organised according to global errors, quantification of errors and sources of errors.

4.1. Sogokiré Speakers' Global Errors

In this section, we present the types of global errors and their quantification. The results of the study present two main types of global errors, i.e., error categories. Within these main types, ten (10) subcategories of global errors have been identified. The following tables present the different global errors.

Table 1: Error categories related to the verb system

Error Categories	Total per category	Percentage per category
Auxiliary errors	337	61%
Verb errors	220	39%
Total	557	100%

Source: data collected from Sogokiré speakers in 3e classes from 11 to 15 May 2026.

Table 2: Error subcategories related to the verb system

Error-subcategories	Total error per subcategory	Percentage error per subcategory
Auxiliary Substitution errors	62	11.13%
Auxiliary omission errors	205	36.80%
Auxiliary addition errors	7	1.26%
Auxiliary Inflection marker substitution errors	61	10.95%
Auxiliary Inflection marker omission errors	2	0.36%
Verb Substitution errors	55	9.87%
Verb omission errors	95	17.06%
Verb Inflection marker Addition errors	4	0.72%
Verb Inflection marker substitution errors	43	7.72%
Verb Inflection marker omission errors	23	4.13%
Total errors	557	100.00%

Source: data collected from Sogokiré speakers in 3e classes from 11 to 15 May 2026.

The above tables show the different global errors. A total of 557 errors were identified and classified into verb and auxiliary errors, and their subcategories. Table 1 presents the categories of errors, including helping verb errors and main verb errors also respectively called auxiliary errors and verb errors. Auxiliary errors accounted for 337 errors (61% of all errors), whereas verb errors accounted for 220 errors (39%). Table 2 shows the different subcategories. Among them, auxiliary omission errors were the most frequent error type with 36.80% of the total errors. The next most frequent error subcategory was verb omission error with 17.06% followed by auxiliary substitution errors (11.13%) and auxiliary inflection marker substitution errors (10.95%). Verb substitution errors occurred 55 times (9.87%) whereas verb inflection marker substitution errors occurred 43 times (7.72%). As for verb inflection marker omission errors, they occurred 23 times (4.13%). Addition errors affecting auxiliaries and verb inflection markers occurred respectively 7 (1.26%) and 4 (0.72%) times. Auxiliary inflection marker substitution errors were minimal, occurring 2 (0.36%) times.

4.2. Sogokiré Speakers' Global Error Causes

This subsection presents the error causes. Some excerpts of the students' production are presented for the analysis below. They are presented following the different causes of the learners' errors. The samples are presented followed by their corrections.

4.2.1. Interlingual Errors

The analysis of the errors shows that s verb system errors derive from two types of interlingual errors. The first one consists of the Sogokiré language (mother tongue/L1) interference, whereas the second cause is related to the French language (intermediary language/L2) interference. The following interlingual errors are as follows:

Interference from the Sogokiré language

- 1) LP: *The students **X** cleaned the room.
EP: The students have cleaned the room.
- 2) LP: * My father **going to** eat rice tomorrow.
b: EP: My father will eat rice tomorrow.

The above excerpts from the students' productions show global errors that can bloc communication. Examples 1), and 2) respectively present auxiliary errors. In example 1), the auxiliary is omitted, preventing readers from understanding the core message that is being conveyed. The students were expected to write sentences describing an action that occurred in

an unspecified period. The students make the confusion between the simple past and the present perfect aspects. This confusion can be due to the interference of the participants' mother tongue because in the Sogokiré language, the structure of these two aspects is similar. The only major difference between them is the use of time references (Millogo, 2024). Therefore, the participants of the study have transferred this structural knowledge of Sogokiré into English. As for example 2), there is an auxiliary substitution error. The modal verb “will” is substituted by “going to” in this example, which is even a partial application of the intended future usage. Here again, the participants were expected to write sentences in the simple future aspect. When the sentence describes the speaker's opinion or prediction without evidence, the simple future aspect is used. The confusion between the intended future and simple future aspects can be due to the interference of the participants' mother tongue, in which the intended future is the only aspect used to express future actions.

Interference from the French language

- 3) LP: *Come home now for the signature, I **X wait** for you every day.
EP: Come home now for the signature, I **am waiting** for you.
- 4) LP: *She has **expliqued** the lesson
EP: She has explained the lesson
- 5) LP: *Aline **is** gone home.
EP: Aline has gone home.
- 6) LP: *He will **X** a policeman.
EP: He will be a policeman.
- 7) LP: *They **have eaten** some rice last week.
EP: They ate some rice last week.

The above sentences present global errors. From examples 3) to 4), there are verb errors. In example 3) the participants omitted the auxiliary “am”, and verb inflection marker “-ing”. The errors, in 3), can be due to French influence “because French can use the habitual present aspect structure to describe present progressive sentences” (Millogo, 2024: 273). In example 4), however, the participants made a verb substitution error. They directly translated the French language verb into English. In French, the verb *expliquer* means *explain* in English. This error is therefore due to the influence of the participants' L2. In 6), the sentence “Aline is gone” might mean the death of Aline, or Aline has left, or disappeared. The use of “Aline is gone home” might mean “Aline died home ...” or “Aline has gone home”. This error is due to the

interference from the French language because the present perfect aspect is used with either the auxiliary “be” or “have” depending on the verb type. Therefore, the participants transferred the French present perfect aspect knowledge into English, leading to global errors, as in “Aline is gone home”, meaning in French “Aline est allée à la maison”. In 7), the sentence is hard to understand due to the omission of the auxiliary “be”. This error is due to the interference of French, in which the future simple aspect marker is amalgamated with the auxiliary “be” to be a single word. The last example shows an auxiliary addition error and a verb inflection marker substitution error. These are cases of French interference because “the resultative present perfect and some actions of the remote past in English can be structurally represented by the resultative present perfect in modern French” (Millogo, 2024: 284)

4.2.2. Intralingual Errors

Overgeneralization/ ignorance of rule restriction/false concept hypothesized

- 8) LP: *My sister **selled** mangoes.
EP: My sisters sold mangoes last day.
- 9) LP: ***Are** you not go home every day?
EP: Do you not go home every day?
- 10) LP: ***Do** you cooking?
EP: Are you cooking?
- 11) LP: * she has **X givenning** him the broom
EP: she has been giving him the broom

Examples 8) shows a verb inflection error. In this example, the participants applied the regular verb simple past aspect marker to irregular verbs where it is not required, leading to overgeneralized the regular past marker “-ed” to irregular verb. They do not know that this rule is restricted to only regular verbs, using their own experience of this rule application (Richard, 1971), hence, ignorance of rule application. Examples 9) and 10) show auxiliary substitution errors. In 9), auxiliary “do” is substituted by the auxiliary “are”, whereas in 10), the auxiliary “are” is substituted by the auxiliary “do”, leading to an overgeneralization of the auxiliaries “be” and “do”, respectively. The last example mentions verb and auxiliary errors, where the “-ing” form is mechanically attached to the past participle of the verb. The participant might have hypothesised that present perfect progressive refers to the addition of the “-ing” form to the past participle of the verb.

Simplification/incomplete application of the rule

12) LP:* we have X waiting for 2 hours

EP: we have been waiting for 2 hours

13) LP: *We X been writing books.

EP: We have been writing books.....

In examples 12) and 13), the auxiliary “been” and “have” are respectively omitted. This omission is due to incomplete application of the rule or the simplification of a complex rule. In fact, based on the participants’ productions, the present perfect progressive aspect seems to be complex to them. A great number of productions in this aspect show the omission of either the auxiliaries “have” or “be”. This can imply that the participants try to simplify this aspect rule because these types of omission errors indicate a simplification of a rule to avoid complexity (Mukattash, 1981).

Incomplete application of the rule

14) LP:* Do you not X French?

EP: Do you not speak French?

In example 14), the participants made a verb omission error. In the above sentence, the participants have not fully applied the rule of the simple present aspect, hence, incomplete application of the rule. All the above-mentioned auxiliary errors prove that the participants need intensive usage of the English aspect (Alanazi, 2017).

5. DISCUSSION

In this section, the findings of the study are discussed based on the research objectives. The first research objective concerns the global errors made by participants in the verb system in English. The analysis reveals that Sogokiré speakers learning English in 3e classes in Burkina Faso secondary schools made two main global errors in the English verb system in their written production. These global errors were categorised into the main verbs and helping verbs. The error categories have been divided into 10 subcategories. These findings align with Millogo’s (2020) findings on syntactic errors, revealing that verb and auxiliary errors constitute global errors for students. Additionally, the global errors were quantified. Among the two categories, auxiliary errors appear to be the most frequent error type with 61% of the total errors. The great number of auxiliary errors echoes Aref Ali Addaibani’s (2017) assertion that auxiliary errors constitute a high rate in EFL learners’ writing. The prominence of auxiliary errors implies that the use of auxiliary in English written production is problematic to Sogokiré native speakers,

which can prevent them from effective written production. Finally, the different global errors were due to various sources, interlingual errors (Sogokiré and French) and intralingual errors. This finding is consistent with Deniz Karan's (2016) study, which reveals that EFL learners' errors are due to L1 and L2 interferences as well as the target language complexity. Based on the participants' data collected, the French language interference was considered higher, compared to the participants' mother tongue. This converges with Missiri Sawadogo's (2020) findings, showing the predominance of influence of the French language in Burkinabe students' English written productions. Overall, intralingual errors were the most predominant cause of the students' global errors in English. They include overgeneralization, simplification, ignorance of rule restriction, incomplete application of the rule, and false concept hypothesized. This finding also echoes Ghiyath Al-Sheikh Ibrahim's (2023) study on verb errors in writing. The predominance of the intralingual cause implies that Sogokiré speakers do not frequently use English aspects as the insufficient use of English aspects among EFL learners can imply that they have not been exposed enough to the English aspects (Alanazi, 2017).

CONCLUSION

The present study deals with global errors in the verb system. It deployed a qualitative study to examine the types of global errors, their quantification, and their causes. The findings reveal that both verb and auxiliary errors are considered global errors for Sogokiré speakers, with the predominance of auxiliary errors. The results also show that the participants' global errors are due to both intralingual and interlingual errors. The findings imply that Sogokiré speakers' learning English in 3e classes in Burkina Faso are confronted with difficulties in the English verb system, which are mainly due to the complexity of its aspects and their structural difference with the participants' mother tongue and their intermediary language (Millogo, 2024). Based on the above shortcomings in the English language learning by Sogokiré speakers, we suggest that teachers should design various practical tutorials on auxiliary usage in all the English aspects. They should also consider the structure of the Sogokiré and French when teaching the different English aspects.

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