

The Impact of Language Transfers on Learners Writing Skills in English Learning Among Students in Mahama Refugee Camp, Rwanda

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effects of language transfers on English learners' writing skills in the Mahama Refugee Camp, Rwanda. The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis Theory and Inter-Language Theory form the foundation of the current research, providing guidance to achieve the study objectives. This study employed a narrative research design. The study population comprised 169 respondents, including school staff and students from named schools B, C, and D. The study drew a sample size of 152 respondents from the target population, using stratified sampling and simple random sampling techniques to ensure adequate representation of all subgroups within the population. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with school teachers, and open-ended questionnaires were designed for students to answer in essay form. The study systematically analyzed the data by coding it to identify themes and patterns, and then interpreted these themes to gain insights and understanding about the research questions. Interviews with vice principals and teachers at Mahama Refugee Camp secondary schools revealed the impact of language transfers on learners' writing skills in English learning. They identified four main challenges: direct translation, incorrect application of grammar rules, incorrect use of vocabulary, and overgeneralization of rules. Direct translation from the mother tongue into English often results in semantically ambiguous sentences because idioms and syntactic structures do not always translate directly. When learners use native English structures, such as verbs in the wrong present tense, incorrect grammar is applied. Lexical misuse involves semantic errors and cognates, where words that sound the same in two languages have different meanings, leading to confusion and incorrect usage. Overgeneralizing native language rules, such as the regular plural system, also leads to errors in English writing. In conclusion, the research at Mahama Refugee Camp secondary schools reveals that language transfer errors, such as incorrect verb tenses and subject-verb agreement, significantly challenge students' English writing proficiency. To mitigate these issues, the study suggests targeted interventions, including focused grammar instruction, contrastive analysis, error correction, and communicative practice. As a recommendation, the government should provide support for professional development programs for teachers focused on addressing language transfer errors in English language writing. Teachers should provide opportunities for students to read extensively in English to help them internalize correct language patterns.

Keys words: English Writing Skills, Language Transfer, Mahama Refugee Camp, Secondary Schools

I. INTRODUCTION

English has become the dominant language in international communication, with around 1.5 billion speakers worldwide, encompassing both native and non-native speakers. This widespread use of English has significant implications for various sectors globally, particularly in education, business, and labor markets. In Africa, approximately 130 million people speak English, which offers numerous opportunities in these fields (British Council, 2020). Writing, a crucial communication skill, is extensively used in higher education and the workplace, yet students face several challenges, including lack of proficiency, large class sizes, and unqualified teachers (Klimova, 2012).

One significant challenge in learning English is the negative impact of language transfer, where students apply structures and rules from their first language (L1) to English, leading to errors. Language transfer can occur at various levels, including pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and discourse. It can be categorized into positive and negative transfer, with negative transfer hindering English language learning by causing errors at all levels (Chen, 2020; Amin, 2017).

For instance, Chinese students struggle with English grammar due to the substantial differences between Chinese and English grammar systems (Sersen, 2011). African contexts also observe similar challenges, indicating that this phenomenon is not unique to China. In Rwanda, the transition from French to English as the medium of instruction has posed significant challenges for both students and teachers of writing (Rwanda Education Board,

2010). This shift has required students to adjust from French grammatical structures to English, leading to various language transfer errors.

In the context of studying language transfer and its impact on English writing proficiency, the independent variables include the students' first language (L1), the educational context (such as the medium of instruction transition in Rwanda), and the level of exposure to English. These variables influence the dependent variables, which are the types and frequency of language transfer errors in English writing. Specifically, errors can manifest in various forms, such as incorrect verb tenses, subject-verb agreement issues, vocabulary misuse, and the overgeneralization of grammatical rules.

Expanding the context from a global perspective to African countries highlights the unique linguistic challenges faced by students learning English. In Africa, where multilingualism is common, students often transition between multiple languages. For example, in Rwanda, the official language policy shifted from French to English in 2008, making English the primary medium of instruction in schools (Rwanda Education Board, 2010). This policy change has led to significant challenges in English language acquisition, particularly in writing.

Studies have shown that Rwandan students frequently encounter difficulties in English writing due to language transfer from Kinyarwanda and French, their primary languages (Samuelson & Freedman, 2010). Large class sizes, limited access to qualified English teachers, and insufficient resources compound these difficulties (Pearson, 2014). As a result, students often struggle with grammatical accuracy, coherence, and overall writing quality.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Numerous studies have explored the impact of negative transfer on English writing skills, emphasizing both positive and negative effects (Brown & Lee, 2015). However, a significant research gap exists in effective strategies and techniques to mitigate these errors, particularly within specific contexts such as refugee camps. Studies have documented the extent of these issues. Guo et al. (2014) discovered that singular and plural forms accounted for 26.8% of errors among Chinese students, sentence cohesion for 30.2%, and predicate verbs for 19.6%. Burhanuddin (2020) reported that 34% of grammatical errors among Indonesian learners were due to incorrect verb-tense forms. Similarly, Kazazoğlu (2020) noted that Turkish students made significant errors in articles (18.82%), prepositions (17.65%), and tenses (11.76%), while Arabic students struggled with capitalization (16.19%) and punctuation (15.06%).

In Rwanda, Ndamba (2013) highlighted that 65% of students faced difficulties with English writing due to vocabulary limitations in Kinyarwanda, and 58% struggled with translating complex concepts from Kinyarwanda to English. Despite these findings, there remains a notable gap in research addressing specific strategies to mitigate these transfer errors and improve writing proficiency. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the challenges faced by students in Mahama Refugee Camp, Rwanda, and proposing targeted interventions. Effective strategies to address these issues could significantly enhance English writing skills among students, inform policymakers and educators about the needs of English learners, and lead to more tailored and effective teaching approaches.

1.2 Research Objective

To examine the impact of language transfers on learners writing skills in English learning among students.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study was directed by a number of theories in relation to mitigating language transfer to enhance English writing for no-native of English in secondary schools due to the time limit and space. The two theories that guided this study are Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) and Interlanguage Theory (IT) and were chosen because both play a big role to mitigate language transfer among students and again they are related with English language teaching and learning. They are called theories of English language teaching/ learning. Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis help educators anticipate areas of difficulty based on the differences between L1 and L2 While Interlanguage theory helps them understand the stages of development in English language acquisition and tailor instruction to address errors and challenges at each stage, ultimately mitigating negative transfer. They have briefly discussed below:

2.1.1 Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis Theory

Developed by Robert Lado, this theory suggests that comparing linguistic elements of L1 and L2 can predict areas where learners might face challenges due to language transfer. By identifying these contrasts, teachers can design targeted instruction to address them (Lado, 1957).

The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) is a theory in the field of English Language Acquisition (SLA) that was developed in the mid-20th century, particularly associated with the work of Robert Lado (González, 2012). As explained by (Lennon, 2008). The central idea behind CAH is that a comparison of the native language (L1) and the target language (L2) can help predict and explain the difficulties that learners may encounter in the process of acquiring the English language.

Lado (1957) introduced the CAH in his 1957 book titled "Linguistics Across Cultures: Applied Linguistics for Language Teachers" (Johansson, 2008). The theory proposed that the difficulties a learner encounters in acquiring an English language are a result of the differences between the native language (L1) and the target language (L2). According to Lado (1957) he believed that identifying these differences through contrastive analysis could help teachers and learners understand and predict areas of a target language where interference from the learner's native language was more likely to occur. By analyzing the contrasts between languages, they could predict which linguistic features might be challenging for learners.

Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis contributes to Analyzing errors produced by language learners of English language s where teachers should give more focused remedial feedback to students to help them overcome language transfer difficulties by identifying the causes of errors (González, 2012). The central idea behind CAH was that by identifying and analyzing the linguistic differences and similarities between a learner's native language and the target language, educators could better understand and address potential language transfer errors. This theory suggests that the difficulty of learning the English language is influenced by the similarities and differences between the learner's native language (L1) and the target language (L2). By comparing the two languages, educators can predict areas where learners are likely to face challenges due to negative transfer from their L1.

For example, if a learner's L1 does not have articles like "a" or "the," they might struggle with using these correctly in English. To mitigate negative transfer, teachers can focus on teaching these areas explicitly, providing explanations and exercises that highlight the differences between the two languages.

2.1.2 Inter-Language Theory

Interlanguage theory is proposed by Larry Selinker, who is known for his work on Interlanguage Theory in 1972. He is a linguist proposed several key ideas related to the implications of Interlanguage Theory for mitigating language transfer, or the influence of a learner's native language on their acquisition of a English language (Frith, 1978). Larry Selinker stated that Interlanguage is the linguistic system that language learners create as they progress toward full competence in a target language. According to (Ain & Widodo, 2019) Interlanguage refers to the linguistic system that learners create as they progress from their native language to their target language. It's essentially a transitional, dynamic state that learners go through as they acquire a new language. Interlanguage theory acknowledges that learners may produce language forms that are neither entirely the same as the native language nor identical to the target language they are trying to learn.

For Selinker, he said that Interlanguage theory primarily deals with the stages and processes of English language acquisition. It doesn't focus on reducing language transfer errors or improving writing proficiency directly, but it is relevant to those issues. Understanding the Stages of Language Acquisition: Interlanguage theory helps educators understand that learners go through distinct stages in acquiring a English language (Mahmood & Murad, 2018). Recognizing these stages can inform teaching strategies and expectations. While interlanguage theory doesn't specifically address writing proficiency, it does offer a framework for comprehending the mistakes and challenges that learners may encounter when writing in a second linguistic. Educators can use this understanding to develop writing tasks and activities that specifically address these challenges.

This theory proposes that English language learners (SLA) develop a separate linguistic system, known as an interlanguage, as they progress toward proficiency in the target language. This interlanguage is influenced by both the learner's L1 and the target language, leading to errors and simplifications as the learner constructs their linguistic system. Educators can use this theory to understand the stages of development that learners go through and tailor instruction to address specific errors and challenges at each stage. By recognizing that errors are a natural part of the learning process, teachers can provide feedback and guidance that help learners move closer to native-like proficiency while minimizing.

2.2 Empirical Review

Language transfer refers to the influence of a learner's native language on their acquisition and use of a English language. In the context of English writing skills among students in secondary schools, language transfer errors can manifest in various ways, impacting grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, and overall coherence of written texts (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2010). This empirical review examines strategies and interventions aimed at mitigating language transfer errors to enhance the English writing skills of secondary school students. Numerous

studies conducted in various parts of the world demonstrate that Language transfer may hinder or facilitate language acquisition depending on the number of similarities and differences between two languages (Odlin, 2020; Trofimovich & McDonough, 2016).

In this study, we focus negative language transfer errors that hinder writing skill as we are mitigating the language transfer errors on English writing among learners where English is taken as their second language learning. Language transfer is an important topic in the field of English language acquisition research. Language transfer can be used to explain the interact among factors in the process of English language learning and influence the acquisition and use of language, and help learners to learn the correct language learning strategies (Feng, 2017). According to Yuan (2021) the degree of English writing proficiency among pupils is greatly impacted by language transfer. Students' ability to write in English language can be enhanced by using understandable input and other instructional strategies that support mother tongue transfer.

As we have defined early what the positive transfer in English language learning refers to the beneficial error of prior knowledge of one language (often the native language) on the learning of English as a English second language (ESL). This can appears in various ways, such as similarities in vocabulary, grammar structures, or pronunciation between the two languages, which make it easier for learners to understand and acquire the new language (Ringbom, 2007; Ellis, 2015). For example, if someone's native language is Spanish and they are learning Italian, they might find it easier to learn Italian due to the similarities in vocabulary and grammar structures between the two Romance languages. Truly, language transfer is a motivation for students who are learning English as a second language when a positive transfer in language takes place. When a student master well L1, he is likely to transfer correct L1 vocabularies, grammar, and pronunciation (Ringbom, 2007).

Teaching writing proficiency in English as second language, teachers have to understand the errors of language transfer that hinder English writing skills among students. In this study, the researcher attempts to describe the errors of negative transfer that hinder English writing among students. Negative transfer occurs when students apply the rules or structures of their native language to English or apply previous learned knowledge of first language in the context of English language learning which resulting errors or interference in their writing (Gass & Selinker, 2008).

Yuan (2021), in her study pointed out common errors made by Chinese students when learning as English as their second language learning when it comes to wring. She identified common errors of negative transfer on English writing among secondary ESL students. Students enjoyed the English learning but when it comes to English writing students feel absent. When students are learning English as their second language learning, they make grammatical errors, syntax errors, vocabulary errors, lack of cohesion and coherence, words order errors, tenses errors caused by their L1 due to the differences from two languages. Students may transfer grammatical rules from their native or previous leant language to English, leading to errors in sentence structure, verb tense, and word order. For example, in some languages, adjectives come after the noun, so students might write "car red" instead of "red car."

Vocabulary errors, Students may use L1 words that are similar in sound or meaning to English words but have different meanings, leading to confusion and misunderstandings. Examples: French and English share many words that look or sound similar but have different meanings. For example, "actuellement" in French means "currently," but many French learners mistakenly use it to mean "actually" in English, which means "in fact" or "really." (Swan, 2001).

Students who learn English as their English language face the challenges of vocabulary Choice, Students may use literal translations of words from their native language, leading to inappropriate word choices in English writing and this affect the clarity and effectiveness of their writing. Example: French learners directly translate French expressions into English, resulting in incorrect usage. For instance, a French student might say "I have 20 years" instead of "I am 20 years old," as in French, the expression is "J'ai 20 ans" (Swan, 2001).

Lack of Cohesion and Coherence: Negative transfer can also affect the overall organization and structure of a student's writing, leading to a lack of cohesion and coherence in their essays and compositions. Namouchi (2008, p.18) clarifies that, if a student does not have or know the vocabulary and the rules of a given language he cannot give his point of view, this is means that student must know the right grammatical structure, the appropriate vocabulary, in addition, to the correct use of punctuation in order to convey coherent and understandable piece of writing(Letters & Examiners, 1945).

According to Sari (2021) in his study, he said that Grammatical interference means that the L1's grammatical patterns is negatively transferred. In this present study, grammatical interference is grammatical error which is caused by the negative transfer of the structure of L1, Bahasa Indonesia, to the target language, English. Negative Transfer of Mother Language in English Compositions by Jiujiang University Students, 2015 published by EDP Sciences written by Yifei Wang The researcher found that there were five kinds of errors caused by negative transfer. They were attributive clauses including avoidance strategy, redundant pronoun or antecedent, omission preposition, underused,

misplaced or redundant relative words. Consciously or unconsciously, transfer errors occurred in students' writing (Sari, 2021). Inappropriate knowledge of grammatical rules affects the results of learners' effective writing. Such writing problems produce embracement among the various students at their academic level. By using good and grammatically correct English students bargain their educational needs effectively (Adams & Keene, 2000)

III. METHODOLOGY

The study used the narrative research design, and the target population is 169 with a sample size of 152 respondents from Mahama Refugee Camp. Stratified and simple random sampling was used. Open-ended questionnaires and interviews were used in collecting data. Presenting data from interviews was done effectively through various methods, such as thematic analysis, and coding.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

4.1 The Impact of Language Transfers on Learners Writing Skills in English Learning Among Students in Mahama Refugee Camp, Rwanda

The findings below were drawn from deputy head teachers and teachers in interview. The deputy head teachers and teachers were asked to give their views on how languages transfer errors affecting negatively the learners writing in English language. Their answers were as follows:

Challenge 1: Direct Translation Issues

Direct translation from the first language (L1) to the English language (L2) often results in sentences that may be grammatically correct but semantically awkward or incorrect. This issue arises because certain idiomatic expressions, syntactic structures, and cultural nuances do not translate directly between languages. For example, a phrase that makes sense in Kinyarwanda might not have a direct equivalent in English, leading to confusion or miscommunication in writing and the example from the finding is linked to the teacher 1 argument:

"One frequent issue I see is students using direct translations from Kinyarwanda that don't quite fit in English. For example, one student wrote "the car is at home" and tried to express "the car is at home". A direct translation from Kinyarwanda does not capture the meaning of the meaning, resulting in a sentence that is not in English."

According to Ellis (2008), these errors arise from a lack of correct equivalence in the vocabulary, syntactic structure and cultural contexts between languages.

Challenge 2: Incorrect Application of Grammar Rules

Language transfer can use the wrong grammar rules. Learners can use L1 grammatical structures in L2, causing errors such as wrong verb or sentence construction. For example, when a Kinyarwanda speaker uses the present tense incorrectly in contexts that refer to the past tense in English, it affects the clarity and accuracy of his writing (Odlin, 1989). To this end, one respondent had this to say:

"I have noticed that students often use present tense when writing about past events. For example, they might write: 'I went to the market yesterday,' instead of 'I went to the market yesterday.' Kinyarwanda to English.

Challenge 3: Vocabulary Misuse

Transliteration problems occur when learners use their L1 vocabulary correctly in an L2 context. This can lead to lexical errors where the chosen word may not really convey the intended meaning, or the incorrect use of a false conjunction (a word that is the same in two languages but different methods). For example, the Kinyarwanda word "imishahara" (salaries) can be confused with "salary" in English, and is used incorrectly in writing (Goss & Selinker, 2008).

"The main problem is that students use words that sound similar in Kinyarwanda and English but have different meanings. For example, the example uses the word "eventually" to mean "sometimes", which reflects the usage in Kinyarwanda, but it means "ultimately". In English, this misuse of words can change the meaning of the writing."

Goss and Selinker (2008) pointed out that incorrect connections and correct translations lead to vocabulary errors, when students use words that are similar to their native language but have different meanings in English. This was evident when one of the students used "eventually" to mean "sometimes", mirroring the usage in Kinyarwanda,

where "eventually" means "ultimately". The wrong wording can change the meaning, because the students may not understand the differences between the languages.

Challenge 4: Overgeneralization of Rules

Learners can generalize L1 rules to L2, resulting in errors. For example, if a language learner summarizes semantic rules from his L1, he may mistakenly apply these rules to many words in English. Sometimes students use the rules they learned in Kinyarwanda in English. For example, they may write "mouses" instead of "mice" and "foots" instead of "feet" because they know a more common rule. The system in the native language leads to mistakes in writing that are difficult to correct "mouses" or "foot" instead of "feet", due to the plural meaning.

Further findings on the impact of language transfers on learners writing skills in English learning among students in Mahama Refugee camp, Rwanda

Respondent eleven: *"In my experience as a teacher, the most commonly observed types of language transfer in English writing among students with diverse language backgrounds include lexical, syntactic, and phonological transfer. Lexical transfer occurs when students borrow vocabulary from their native languages, resulting in mixed sentences where English words are interspersed with words from Kinyarwanda, Kiswahili, Kirundi, or French. This often leads to confusion and a lack of clarity in their writing. Syntactic transfer involves the direct translation of sentence structures from the students' native languages into English, which can result in grammatically incorrect or awkward sentences. For instance, students might use subject-verb-object structures that mirror their native language rules, leading to errors in tense and agreement. Phonological transfer, on the other hand, is when students write words as they sound in their native language, causing spelling mistakes and mispronunciations. These types of language transfer significantly affect English writing by reducing readability and making it challenging for students to express their thoughts accurately. They also reflect a deeper need for targeted language instruction that addresses these specific transfer issues, helping students to develop proficiency in English without the interference of their native language structures". Respondent one identified lexical, syntactic, and phonological transfer as the most common types of language transfer observed in English writing among students with diverse language backgrounds. Lexical transfer involves borrowing vocabulary from native languages, resulting in mixed sentences that cause confusion and reduce clarity."*

This finding is consistent with Odlin (1989) who suggests that lexical switching often results in code-switching and word errors in students' bilingual texts. Grammatical transfer is when students translate sentence structures from their native language, resulting in grammatically incorrect sentences. This is in line with the findings of Ringbom (2007), who confirmed that syntactic transitions can cause structural errors in English writing. Transliteration, when students write words that are written in the natural language, they produce spelling errors, which is also supported by the research of Swan and Smith (2001), who found that the interference of The language has many pronunciation and spelling mistakes among English learners.

Respondent 9 who has extensive experience teaching students from different languages, points out that:

"Positive and negative language exchange is common in English writing. Good transfer occurs when English and the student's native language are similar to facilitate learning and help students grasp concepts more quickly. For example, students who speak French find it easier to understand English vocabulary and grammar because of the large overlap between the two languages. However, it is often found that the transmission is bad, which is a big challenge. A negative transfer is vocabulary borrowing, where students insert their dominant language words into English sentences, thereby engaging in code entry. For example, a student might write, "I don't know the words ariko ngirira swawe n'uburanga bw'ikinyarwanda," mixing English and Kinyarwanda. Grammatical transfer is also common, where students use the grammatical rules of their native English and make mistakes in sentence construction. For example, a Kinyarwanda language student might write, "He goes to school every day," omits the third person because of a difference in conjugation rules. In addition, the interviewee made two comments regarding the exchange of words in writing and pronunciation. Students often write words that appear in their native language, which may result in incorrect spelling and grammar. For example, a student might write "Jedi" as "Sirius", showing the pronunciation of the language in the original language. The second respondent emphasized the dual nature of language exchange and pointed out positive and negative mistakes. Good transfer can be learned when the native language and English are similar, such as word distribution or grammar."

This view is supported by Cummins (2000), who states that similarity between languages can accelerate English learning through effective transfer. Selinker (1972) introduced the term "interlanguage" and suggested that

poor transfer from the first language leads to systematic errors in the second language. This includes word numbers and grammatical errors, where students can mix English with their mother tongue, resulting in coding and grammatical errors. Collectively, these findings emphasize the complexity of language transfer and the need for targeted teaching strategies to reduce these errors.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

The study examines the impact of language transfers on learners writing skills in English learning among students, based on interviews with vice-principals and teachers. These experts provided valuable perspectives on some of the key challenges associated with language transfer in written English: Direct translation from Kinyarwanda to English often results in the sentence is grammatically correct but is awkward or semantically incorrect. This problem arises because idiomatic expressions, syntactic structures, and cultural nuances do not always have direct equivalents across languages. For example, one student's attempt to directly translate "The car is at home" into English as "The car is home" demonstrated confusion due to literal translation (Participant 1). This conclusion echoes that of Ellis (2008), who pointed out that such errors arise from differences in idiomatic expression and cultural context across languages. Cross-language translation can use grammatical rules incorrectly from Kinyarwanda to English. Students often use the present tense in contexts that require the past tense, such as writing and "Yesterday I went to the market" and "Yesterday I went to the market and" (participant 1).

Odlin (1989) also noted similar challenges and suggested that language learners often struggle with vocabulary and sentence structure due to the influence of the grammatical rules of the target language. Transliteration problems occur when students use Kinyarwanda words incorrectly in English contexts. This can prevent vocabulary errors where words are used incorrectly or related words are confused. For example, the use of using "eventually" to mean "sometimes" reflects a misunderstanding of its English meaning, reflects a poor understanding of its meaning in English (Participant 1). Gass and Selinker (2008) have shown that false cognates and direct translations often lead to vocabulary errors, affecting the clarity and accuracy of students' writing. Students may overgeneralize grammatical rules from Kinyarwanda to English, leading to errors in irregular plurals and other linguistic structures. For example: For example, writing "mouses" instead of "mice" illustrates how learners apply regular pluralization rules from their native language to English (Participant 1).

Lightbown and Spada (2013) note that overgeneralization of language rules is a common challenge in second language acquisition, affecting the accuracy and precision of written English. Additional information from the interviews highlighted the prevalence of lexical, syntactic and phonological transfer among students from diverse language backgrounds. Lexical transfer included borrowing vocabulary from the mother tongue, syntactic transfer leading to structural errors in sentence construction and phonological transfer affecting spelling and pronunciation (Respondent 1). These findings are supported by research highlighting how positive and negative language transfer affect English language learning outcomes (Respondent 2). The complexity of language transfer highlights the need for targeted instructional strategies to address these specific challenges. Educators should focus on teaching grammar in context, enhancing vocabulary development and raising awareness of language differences through contrastive analysis. By addressing these issues, educators can help students develop English writing skills without being interfered with by the structures of their native language.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

Results from interviews with vice principals and teachers highlight the significant challenges that language transfer errors pose to learners' English writing skills. Direct translation problems result in semantically incorrect or awkward sentences, because idiomatic expressions and syntactic structures in the first language (L1) do not always have direct English equivalents. Incorrect application of L1 grammar rules leads to errors in verb tense and sentence structure, affecting the clarity and accuracy of writing. Lexical misuse, in which learners use L1 words inappropriately in English, causes semantic errors, while overgeneralization of L1 rules leads to incorrect plurals and other structural errors. In addition, lexical, syntactic, and phonological transfer is common, contributing to mixed sentences, grammatical errors, and spelling errors. These findings highlight the need for teaching strategies that address specific transfer issues and help students develop English skills without disrupting the structures of their native language.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations were made, addressing key stakeholders such as the government of Rwanda, school administration, teachers, and students. The government is encouraged to provide support for professional development programs for teachers, specifically aimed at addressing translanguaging errors in



English writing. This support could take the form of funding for workshops, seminars, and resources. Additionally, it is recommended that the government implement policies promoting the use of bilingual education models in refugee camps, allowing students to maintain their first language while learning English.

The school administration is advised to create a supportive environment for teachers to experiment with new strategies and practices to reduce language transfer errors. This could involve providing time and resources for professional development. Furthermore, periodic evaluations should be conducted to monitor the effectiveness of the strategies used to reduce translation errors, making corrections as needed.

Teachers are encouraged to include clear instructions on the differences between the first language and English in their teaching. They should also provide students with opportunities to read widely in English, which will help them incorporate appropriate language patterns.

Students are advised to be actively involved in reading and writing in English to improve their language skills. They should seek feedback from teachers and peers on their writing to identify and correct any translation errors.

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