

ENGLISH PRONOUNS IN THE WRITING OF SOME BATSWANA STUDENTS¹

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Abstract

This paper examines the morphological and syntactic differences between English and Setswana pronouns, and how these differences manifest in students' usage of English pronouns at the University of Botswana. It also discusses some of the ways by which the learners may be assisted to become more proficient in using English pronouns. An analysis of 542 essays written by second and fourth year students of the Department of English reveal the following categories of pronoun errors: the intrusion of an independent subject pronoun between a subject and its verb, the conflation of the standard expression *the one...the other* into *the other...the other*, inter substitution of *they/there/their*, lack of gender and case distinctions, use of pronouns without antecedents and pronoun referent agreement errors. In terms of the sources of these errors, the paper shows that the first six types of errors seem to relate directly or indirectly to the morphological and syntactic structures of Setswana pronouns while the last type is largely intralingual. The paper recommends that policy planners should recognise the existence of Botswana English and its influence on learners' acquisition of English, and appropriately reflect this in language teaching policy, tests and exams in the country. It also suggests that teachers should raise their awareness of Botswana English in order to be able to distinguish between learners' usage that are unpredictable and those that have become systematic localisms, and delegate more learning responsibility to the learners themselves.

Keywords: second language learning, English pronouns, Setswana pronouns

Introduction

Studies on learning and using L2 grammatical features indicate that L2 learners exhibit differential attitudes. Jiang (2007:5) postulates that 'L2 learners are often more successful in learning some structures than others'. DeKeyser (2003) cited by Ellis (2006:431), in looking at the complexity of grammatical structures, distinguishes between 'objective and subjective difficulty'. While objective difficulty relates to the inherent difficulty of grammatical structures, subjective difficulty refers to the actual difficulty that individual learners experience in L2 acquisition. It may be inferred from these views that ESL students contend with different issues in learning to become competent in using L2 grammatical structures. Jiang (2007), in fact, asserts that a major difference between L1 and L2 acquisition is in the outcomes. While 'automatic competence in all aspects of language is the invariable outcome in L1, some aspects of L2 tend to fossilize' (p. 15).

Seow & Tay (2004) infer from their study 'that possessive pronouns are more difficult to acquire than personal pronouns, and that possessive pronouns with the nominal function (mine, yours, ours) are more difficult than those with the determiner function (my, your, our).' Hinkel (2003:125), on the other hand, notes that second language learners are of the view that English pronouns are 'syntactically and lexically simple'. As a result, they manifest 'various types of pronoun usage problems which are closely related to the transfer of culturally determined considerations of appropriateness in pronoun use'. It may be possible to account for this transfer, especially with respect to pronoun usage, by examining the syntactic and morphological differences between L1 and L2 pronouns. Arising from the observations above, this study has three research goals: to examine in what ways Setswana pronouns differ, morphologically and syntactically, from English pronouns, discuss the pedagogical implications of the differences for ESL students at the University of Botswana by analysing some of the pronoun errors in the students' writing and their sources, and suggest how students can be assisted to become more proficient in using English pronouns.

Acquisition of Grammatical Structures

The acquisition of grammatical structures, generally, in L1 and L2 shows vital similarities. For example, Wells (1979, 1985), Shepherd (1982), Perkins (1983) and Wellman (1990) all indicate that in first language, learners acquire the non-epistemic use of modal verbs much earlier than their epistemic functions. With respect to pronouns, Hanson, Harley and Ritter (2000:5), in their comparison of the findings from ten different studies, report that 'there is a lot of variability in the order of emergence of pronouns in children'. Many of the studies, however, seem to suggest that the first person singular or the third neuter inanimate pronoun emerges first in L1 acquisition followed by the second person pronoun. Their findings also indicate that singular pronouns are acquired before the plural ones. Although these findings specifically relate to L1, they are also applicable to L2 acquisition.

Felix and Hahn (1985) cited in Ellis (1994: 96) note that 'nearly all studies of naturalistic acquisition provide evidence of frequent omission of pronouns and overgeneralisation of individual pronouns during the early stages.' Their proposed 'tentative ordering', which is in consonance with Hanson, Harley and Ritter's (2000:5) observation above, indicates that learners begin by distinguishing the first person singular 'I' or 'me' from all others. Subsequently, number distinctions appear while gender distinctions are acquired last. In Ellis' (1994: 96) review of pronoun acquisition, the general view is that learners of different languages, English, French, German, Dutch and Spanish, 'experienced similar problems with pronouns'. The dimension of L1 is a major consideration in studies of ESL usage because of the morphological, syntactic and lexical differences between L1 and L2 grammatical forms. As will be shown in this study, pronouns in Setswana, which is spoken by the vast majority of the students whose essays were analysed in the study, are significantly different from English pronouns in their morphology and syntax.

In addition, there are many more types of full pronouns in English than in Setswana.

English and Setswana in Botswana

In Botswana, English is the official language while Setswana is the national language. English is the language of government, law, business and education, as the medium of instruction from standard three. English, therefore, enjoys some prominence by virtue of its official functions in the society. Setswana, on the other hand, as the national language, 'is spoken by at least 80% of the population as a mother tongue and understood to some extent by another 10%' (Bagwasi, 2003: 213). In addition, it is the language by which the government communicates with the people. Thus, English and Setswana coexist and interact closely in virtually all spheres of life, including the English language classroom, especially in the high schools in Botswana.

The coexistence of the languages is important because it draws attention to the possible influence of Setswana on the acquisition of English pronouns and other L2 grammatical forms. Bokamba (1982:83), for example, 'identifies interposing of an independent subject pronoun between a subject and its verb' as a common error in the English of Bantu language speakers. Similarly, Arua (2004) identifies the indefinite pronominal phrase *the other* and the redundant use of personal/reflexive pronouns, amongst others, as some of the syntactic features of Botswana English. Since these types of usage which are deviant by native standards, may be worrisome to teachers, Norish's (1999) advice that teachers in ESL environments should become 'linguistically aware' of the potential for 'localisms' to become part of the language resources of their communities, is pertinent. This view resonates with that of Jiang (2007:5) who describes 'fossilisation' as a natural outcome of L2 learning. These observations suggest that L2 learner errors deserve to be carefully studied in order to adopt suitable measures, including policy changes, to correct them.

Methodology

Two sets of essays written by second and fourth year students of the Department of English were analysed for pronoun errors. The two samples were selected in order to have an overview of students' competence midway into and at the end of their programmes. Five hundred and forty two scripts, 271 each from the two groups, were analysed and the errors categorised. The categories adopted were: gender, number, case, interposition of subject pronoun between a subject and its verb, pronoun inter substitution, the conflation of the standard expression *the one...the other* into *the other...the other* and pronouns without antecedents. An error that occurred frequently within the same sentence was counted only once for purposes of quantifying and establishing the distribution of the errors. Pronoun errors observed in each of the seven categories were counted and presented in percentages. In order to discuss the pedagogical implications of the differences

between Setswana and English pronouns, some English sentences demonstrating the use of particular English pronouns were translated into Setswana. These sentences were carefully studied to establish probable links or associations with the students' usage. There were other types of deviant usage in the data, but these were ignored since they are outside the scope of this study. In the next section, the findings of the study are discussed beginning with the syntactic and morphological differences between Setswana and English pronouns.

Findings

Morphological and Syntactic Features of Setswana and English Pronouns

English and Setswana pronouns differ significantly not only in terms of types and number but also with respect to the grammatical categories of case and gender. Setswana has three major types of pronouns, absolutes (full), demonstratives and qualificatives. Absolute and demonstrative pronouns are the basic forms which are irreducible while qualificatives, which are derived from other parts of speech, can function as subjects or objects (Cole, 1955:127). The root for the absolute pronouns in Setswana is *na* which is inflected in consonance with the noun class² of its referent and is marked for number. Thus, *nna/rona* denote first person singular/plural while *wena/lona* denote second person singular/plural. The third person pronoun, singular /plural, is morphologically realised by affixation, to reflect the noun class of the item being denoted. For example, a singular noun belonging to class 7 (made up of abstract, and collective nouns, and nouns with locative significance) bears the prefix *bo* and, therefore, would be referred to by the singular third person pronoun *bone*. Essentially, there is only one absolute (full) personal pronoun. It distinguishes neither case nor gender, and its morphology, in the third person, is determined by the noun class categorisation of its referent, irrespective of the gender of that referent. This situation is in contrast with English which has seven personal pronouns that are marked for the subjective, objective and genitive cases.

There are four sets of demonstrative pronouns in Setswana, each of which is distinguished for number. Each pair has clearly distinct positional/locative references, and their forms also agree with the noun classes of their referents. The first set, *yo/ba*, describes things relatively near to the speaker. The second set, *yoo/bao*, refers to things relatively distant from the speaker. The third and fourth sets, *yono/bano*, *yole/bale* refer to things immediately close to and remote from the speaker, respectively (Cole, 1955:130-132). The implication of the above is that Setswana has more demonstrative pronouns than English, and it semantically grades distance. Demonstrative pronouns and the various forms of the full pronouns in Setswana, however, are marked for number just like English pronouns.

The third group of pronouns in Setswana, qualificatives, comprises different types: adjectival, enumerative, quantitative, possessive and relative. Some items

which function like the English possessive, relative and indefinite pronouns are in this broad category. However, in Setswana, these pronouns usually succeed, agree and occur with the nouns they describe. Unlike the English relative pronouns, Setswana relative qualificatives have no case distinctions.

Pronoun Errors

In this section, a summary of the different categories of pronoun errors identified in the students' essays and their distribution is given. Examples, for each category, are, thereafter, presented and the probable sources of each type of error highlighted. Table 1 below compares the frequency distribution of pronoun errors between the two groups of students used in the study, while Table 2 shows the spread of each category of errors measured by the number of students who actually make them.

Table 1: Types and Frequency Distribution of Pronoun Errors

Level	Gender	Number	Case	Inter position of subject pronouns	The other... the other	Pro nouns without antecedents	Pronoun inter Substitution	Total
Year 2	63 (13.3%)	142 (30.0%)	89 (18.8%)	34 (7.2%)	18 (3.8%)	4 (0.8%)	42 (8.9%)	392 (82.9%)
Year 4	2 (0.4%)	43 (9.1%)	3 (0.6%)	7 (1.5%)	15 (3.2%)	7 (1.5%)	4 (0.8%)	81 (17.1%)
Total	65 (13.7%)	185 (39.1%)	92 (19.5%)	41 (8.7%)	33 (7.0%)	11 (2.3%)	46 (9.7%)	473 (100%)

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Pronoun Errors per Student

Level	Gender	Number	Case	Inter position of subject pronouns	The other the other	Pro nouns without antecedents	Pronoun inter Substitution
Year 2 N=271	63 (23.2%)	142 (52.4%)	89 (32.8%)	34 (12.5%)	18 (6.6%)	4 (1.5%)	42 (15.5%)
Year 4 N=271	2 (0.7%)	43 (15.9%)	3 (1.1%)	7 (2.6%)	15 (5.5%)	7 (2.6%)	4 (1.5%)

Table 1 shows that 473 pronoun errors were identified. Of this number, 82.9 % (392) was found in the second year essays and 17.1% (81) in the fourth year essays. Errors of number constituted the highest for both groups of students. For the second year students, number errors constituted 30.0% (142) while in the fourth year, number errors constituted 9.1% (43). Case errors ranked second, constituting 18.8% (89) in the second year samples while the conflation of the

standard expression *the one...the other* into *the other...the other*, 3.2% (15) ranked second in the fourth year samples. Gender related errors ranked third, 13.3%(63), for the second year students while the interposition of an independent subject pronoun between a subject and its verb, 1.5% (7) and pronouns without antecedent, 1.5%(7), both ranked third for the fourth year students. In the second year sample, the inter-substitution of *they/there/their* which constituted 8.9% (42) and the interposition of an independent subject pronoun between a subject and its verb, 7.2% (34), ranked fourth and fifth respectively. The expression *the other ...the other*, 3.8% (18) ranked sixth and pronouns without antecedents, 0.8% (4) ranked seventh. In the fourth year essays, the inter substitution of *they/there/their* constituted 0.8% (4) and ranked fifth while errors of case constituted 0.6% (3) and ranked sixth. Gender errors ranked seventh in the fourth year essays, constituting only 0.4% (2).

There are two interesting observations regarding the distribution of the errors above. First is that the preponderance of errors of number in the data conforms to findings referred to in the literature (DeKeyser 2003, Hanson, Harley and Riter, 2000, and Felix and Hahn, 1985) which indicate that plural pronouns feature much later than the singular ones. The second is that the pronoun errors identified above reduced appreciably in the fourth year essays except for pronouns without antecedents and the expression *the other...the other*. That there were fewer instances of other errors in the fourth year essays is an indication of some improvement in the learners' use of pronouns in their fourth year.

The trend in Table 2 in terms of the average number of students involved in each type of error in simple percentages is quite similar to the pattern observed in Table 1. In the second year, 52.4% (142) of the students made errors of number while in the fourth year, the percentage dropped significantly to 15.9% (43). Errors relating to case which attracted 32.8% (89) of the students in the second year significantly reduced to only 1.1% (3) in the fourth year while errors of gender attributable to 23.3% (63) of the students in the second year also reduced significantly to 0.7% (2). The inter-substitution of pronouns reduced from 15.5% (42) in the second year to 1.5%(4) in the fourth year while the interposition of a subject pronoun between a subject and its verb reduced from 12.5%(34) in the second year to 2.6% (7) in the fourth year. The results for the last two categories of errors, the expression *the other...the other* and pronouns without antecedents are quite interesting. For the former, the difference between the averages for the two sets of students is not appreciable, 6.6% (18) in the second year and 5.5% (15) in the fourth year. With respect to the latter, 1.5% (4) and 2.6% (7) of the students in year two and four respectively still indulged in this category of error. These two categories as well as the interposition of independent subject pronouns between a subject and its verb, as will be shown in the next section of this paper, seem to emanate from the L1. In addition, there is some evidence that these errors appear to have fossilised, as they have been characterised as syntactic features of the emerging local variety of English in Botswana.

In the next section, the likely sources for each category of errors are discussed using some examples from the data presented in Tables 3 – 9.

Gender Errors

Table 3 provides sentences illustrating gender errors.

Table 3: Gender errors

S/N	Sentence	Remark
1	Traditional grammar was later studied by the Romans which were the ones who provided misleading principle of grammar.	use of neuter gender for masculine/feminine
2	A grammar can be said to have explanatory adequacy when he understands the study of syntax and be able to produce sentence that are grammatically correct.	use of masculine gender for neuter
3	Mrs Morel also has never had an emotional bond with his husband because his husband lacked compassion.	use of masculine gender for feminine
4	One of the college headmaster rejected Jude solely on his lowly social status. He told him that he could rather concentrate on her ecclesisical job than studying	use of feminine gender for masculine

The examples above show two things: first, the neuter gender is not distinguished from the masculine/feminine gender, and second, masculine and feminine pronouns are not distinguished. The Setswana versions, 1(i) and 1(ii) of the translated English sentences below show that gender is neither a morphological nor syntactic feature of Setswana pronouns:

1(i) His wife is tall

Mosadiwa gagwe o moleele.
Wife_i of_i his SA_i 1-tall

(ii) Her husband is tall

Monna wa gagwe o moleele.
husband_i of_i hers SA_i 1-tall

Obviously, the L1 cannot be ruled out as a contributory factor to the non-distinction of gender in the students' essays. As Rinvoluceri (2001:44) asserts, 'TL and MT, are both frequently present in the learners' mind' even in the classroom. Ellis' (1994:96) assertion that gender distinction features last in L1 acquisition also suggests that this error might be related to the inherent complexity of gender in pronouns as a grammatical category. The fact that the number of gender errors reduced significantly in the fourth year essays (see Tables 1 & 2), strengthens the view that gender as a grammatical category is objectively difficult. It can be inferred that both intra- and inter-lingual factors are responsible for gender errors in the students' usage. The reduction of the errors in the fourth year samples is an

indication that given time, many of the learners become more conversant with the neuter masculine and feminine distinctions in English pronouns.

Case Errors

In Table 4, examples of pronoun errors relating to case are presented.

Table 4: Case errors

S/N	Sentence	Remark
1	<i>It's</i> rules applies only to written language not speech.	use of the contracted form for the possessive case
2	I believe that traditional grammar cannot be used for modern linguistic description because <i>its</i> prescriptive.	use of the possessive case for the contracted form
3	Getrude was an intellectual, pious, religious and dutiful wife <i>whom</i> was from a rich family.	use of the objective for the subjective case
4	The houghnhnms are cooperative being...they all come in large numbers so as to assess the opportunities together then they will equally share according to each of <i>them's</i> needs.	use of the objective for the genitive case

Case errors in the essays of the two groups of students are of two types. First, they do not distinguish between the contracted and genitive forms of *it is* (*it's*) and *its*. This is, perhaps, the result of conflating two unrelated structures. Second, they also do not make a distinction between the subjective and objective forms of some personal and relative pronouns as shown in Table 4 above. In the translated Setswana sentences 2(i) and 2(ii) below, *who* and *whom* are indicated using the same qualificative form *yo*:

2(i) The boy whom he named Paul is sleeping
 Mosimane yo a m-midits-eng are Paul
 Boy₁ rel. SA₁ SA₁-call -past SA₁-that Paul_{1a}
 o robetse.
 cop. sleeping

(ii) The boy who he named Paul is sleeping
 Mosimane yo a m-midits-eng are Paul
 Boy₁ rel.₁ SA₁ SA₁-call -past SA₁-that Paul_{1a}
 o robetse.
 cop. Sleeping

Case errors, like gender errors, seem traceable to the L1. However, the non-distinction of *it's* from *its* in the data is the product of the apparent confusion that the two structures engender. Also they seem objectively difficult for the learners because of the similarity of their forms.

Number Errors

Table 5 provides illustrations on number errors, the third category of pronoun errors in the students' essays.

Table 5: Number Errors

S/N	Sentence	Remark
1	In essence all languages have unique sounds and words therefore deserve to be studied and given equal opportunity to prove its worthiness.	singular pronoun for plural antecedent
2	TG is prescriptive and its definitions are notional and ...it established the rules and regulations that governs the use of language, this rule and regulations resulted in them to present some languages as correct and prestigious.	singular pronoun (with determiner function) for plural antecedent.
3	This words are used to link a sentence	singular pronoun (with determiner function) to introduce/modify plural head
4	These tragedy corroded/destroyed the relationship between Sue and Jude	Plural pronoun (with determiner function) to introduce/modify mass noun

The examples above reveal that the students' usage of *this* and *these*, whether as nominals or determiners, does not show that they are aware of the singular plural distinction between the two items. Yet, this is the one characteristic that Setswana and English pronouns have in common, as the Setswana translations of the sentences in 3(i) and 3(ii) show:

3(i) This is a fine car
 Koloi e e ntle
 Car₉ this₉ SA₉ 9-nice

(ii) These are fine cars
 Tse ke dikoloi tse di-ntle
 these₁₀ cop. car₁₀ SA₁₀ 10-nice

Also, the fact that pronoun agreement error remains prominent even in the fourth year (15.9% of the students still made this error) is an indication of its difficulty as a grammatical category. In addition, the difficulty that the learners have with *this* and *these* which are two pronouns that are mostly used interchangeably in the data might be associated with the phonology of many African languages which conflates the /ɪ/ and /i:/vowels. Number errors, therefore, seem to be a combination of intra- and inter-lingual factors. The prevalence of this

category of errors in the fourth year essays indicates that it is an area that ought to be accorded more attention in the English language curriculum both in the high schools and tertiary institutions.

Errors of Pronouns without Antecedents

In Table 6, examples of pronoun errors relating to case are presented.

Table 6: Pronouns without Antecedents

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Sentence</i>	<i>Remark</i>
1	When English was developed, it was based on Latin rules. English was latinised such that their language had to change in order to accommodate these changes.	'their' neither refers to English nor Latin rules so it has no antecedent.
2	It is through the use of language that we can understand each other and what they mean.	'they' refers to neither of the preceding noun phrases
3	Jude was not allowed in University because of his background, social upbringing, his goals in life were never achieved because of the status quo, why is a poorman not allowed to change his life, and who are they to tell someone that it is fate if not destiny to be poor.	'they' is intrusive because it has no referent
4	The purpose of the text is awareness. They want to make aware to us all what goes on in the world.	'they' does not refer to the subject noun phrase of the preceding sentence.

The examples in Table 6 show that the use of pronouns without antecedents in the second and fourth year essays may be connected with the fact that the students take for granted the referent for each of the pronouns. The error, therefore, appears to be connected with the tendency to overgeneralise, which is in consonance with the literature (see Felix and Hahn, 1985 cited in Ellis, 1994: 96 referred to earlier). For instance in sentence 1 above, the writer, apparently, assumes that the noun *English* refers to both the people and the language. Similarly *they* in example 3 is assumed to refer to the subject of the previous sentence. It is also likely that the tendency in Setswana discourse to use agreement markers in place of full pronouns whenever a sufficiently clear single reference for the latter has been indicated contributes to the use of pronouns without antecedents in the data.

In Table 7, samples of sentences illustrating the intrusion of an independent subject pronoun between a subject and its verb are presented. The interposition of independent subject pronouns between subject nouns and their verbs seems to be connected with the L1. In Setswana, agreement markers which are often repeated may function as pronouns. As indicated in the discussion on pronouns without antecedents, full pronouns would only be necessary for emphasis in Setswana discourse. It seems that the potential of agreement markers, which can be repeated,

to replace full pronouns is closely associated with interposing independent subject pronouns between subjects and their verbs. The Setswana translations of sentences 4(i) and 4(ii) in which *rona* (we/us) is repeated attest to this syntactic property of pronouns in Setswana:

- 4(i) We parents, we know our children's tricks
 Rona batsadi re itse maretshwa a
 We parents₂ SA₂ know tricks of
 bana ba rona
 children₂ of₂ us
- (ii) We parents know our children's tricks
 Rona batsadi re itse maretshwa a
 We parents₂ SA₂ know tricks of
 bana ba rona
 children₂ of₂ us

Table 7: Interposition of Independent Subject Pronouns

S/N	Sentence	Remark
1	Traditional grammar due to its rigid rules, it did not give room to flexibility of the language as modern linguistics does.	'it' interrupts subject and verb of the sentence.
2	Oliver as the one in control, he uses his power to oppress Orlando.	'he' interrupts subject and verb of the sentence
3	The fact that More refused to sign, he was executed after being charged with high treason.	'he' interrupts subject and verb of the sentence
4	He, the king, his wife and his sons, they are not supposed to leave their palace, the floating island.	'they' interrupts subject and verb of the sentence

In fact, there is in no difference between the translated versions of the two sentences above and this suggests that it might be instinctive for the learners to interrupt subjects and verbs by introducing independent subject pronouns. A related usage described as the redundant use of personal, reflexive pronouns by Arua (2004) has been characterised as a syntactic feature of Botswana English. This, in addition to Bokamba's assertion (1982: 83) that interposing independent subject pronouns between a subject and a verb is a common usage in the English of Bantu language speakers, strengthens the view that the error is traceable to the L1.

The Expression 'The Other...The Other'

In Table 8, samples of sentences illustrating the expression *the other ...the other* are provided. The usage *the other ...the other* bears some resemblance with the Setswana morphology of the English words *one*, *other* and *another*, all denoted by the same lexical item *ngwe*. When this item is in the subject position, it is prefixed as shown in examples 5(i) and (ii) below. In order to express correlation,

the standard expression *the one... the other* is conflated by the students to *the other ... the other* possibly because Setswana does not distinguish *one, other and another*. This is supported by the translated Setswana sentences, 5(i) and (ii), in which the same lexical item denotes *one* and *other*:

- 5(i) I have two houses, one is big, while the other is small
 Ke na-le matlo a-le ma-bedi
 SA₁ have-cop. house₅ cop. 6-two
 e-nngwe e tona, e-nngwe e-nnye.
 Agr₅-one Agr₅-big Agr₅-one Agr₅-small
- (ii) I have two houses, the other is big and the other is small.
 Ke na-le matlo a-le ma-bedi
 SA₁ have-cop. house₅ cop. 6-two
 e-nngwe e tona, e-nngwe e-nnye.
 Agr₅-one Agr₅-big Agr₅-one Agr₅-small

Table 8: *The other ... the other*

S/N	Sentence	Remark
1	Unlike modern grammar, traditional grammar considered other languages superior than others .	repetition of 'other(s)'
2	TG's study was subjective in the sense that other languages like Latin for example were prioritised over other languages.	repetition of 'other'
3	The sentence means that even if other yahoos are tied, the other yahoos in the neighbouring place will group together and circle the dead animal.	repetition of 'other' and 'the other'
4	Yahoos wage wars against other yahoos of other districts and if the attacks are futile, they may as well return home and start a civil war among each other.	repetition of 'other'

It appears that the conflation of the standard usage *one* and *the other* to *the other... the other* is enhanced by the fact that the three lexical items *one, other* and *another* converge into one word with adjectival and pronominal functions in Setswana. It seems also that the general lack of distinction between *each other* and *one* to indicate reciprocity in some of the students' essays derives from this convergence as illustrated by the Setswana translated sentences in 6(i) and 6(ii) below.

- 6(i) Two boys attacked each other
 Basimane ba-le babedi ba tlhasel-an-e
 Boys₂ 2-cop. 2-two SA₂ attack-recip.-FV
- (ii) Ten boys attacked one another
 Basimane ba-le lesome ba tlhasel-an-e
 Boys₂ 2-cop. ten SA₂ attack-recip.-FV

Inter-substitution of *they/there/their*

Some examples of sentences with the last category of pronoun errors, the inter substitution of *they/there/their* are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Inter-substitution of *they/there/their*

S/N	Sentence	Remark
1	Their are ways in which a hierarchy is presented	'their' substituted for 'there'
2	Philosophical period which is the 17 th century addressed whether they was a principle of proportionalist for nature.	'they' substituted for 'there'
3	Swift was satirising the rulers who never get tired of power, use people and later discard them when there are of no use to them.	'there' substituted for 'they'
4	During these times, they was a lot of things like Muslim and the churches played a key role in the running or controlling the state or town.	'they' substituted for 'there'

The inter-substitution of *they/there/their* is apparently because the students confuse the three lexical items. The confusion may be caused by two factors. The first is that students' do not discriminate between the following English vowels: /ei/ in *they* and /eə/ in *there* and *their*. This practice itself may be connected to the absence of diphthongs in many African languages. The second factor has to do with the fact that *their* and *there* are homophones. Interestingly, Alimi and Mathangwane (2006: 94) indicate that *there/they* and *their/they* are confused because both pairs are perceived as homophones. However, the data in this study actually show that the three items are treated as one lexical item. The reason for the confusion of the three items may be phonological and semantic.

The discussion above has shown that the morphological and syntactic structures of pronouns in Setswana have some influence on the students' use of English pronouns. Out of the seven categories of errors identified, three of them: inter position of independent subject pronouns between subjects and their verbs, use of the expression *the other... the other* and the inter substitution of *they/there/their* appear to derive directly from L1 pronoun structures. Two other types of errors, lack of gender and case distinctions, are associated primarily with L1 factors, and secondarily with the general difficulty that many learners have with these categories. The error of pronouns without antecedents has also been shown to be connected primarily with overgeneralisation as well as the tendency to restrict the use of full pronouns in Setswana. The last type of error which relates to lack of number distinction seems to be an error that is predominantly intralingual, more so that Setswana pronouns are marked for number. The last section of the paper addresses the third goal: how the students may be helped to improve their proficiency in using English pronouns.

Helping Learners to Learn English Pronouns

In Botswana, as in other parts of Africa, the English language has continued to respond to 'the local language ecology', resulting in the emergence of a non-native variety. In view of this important development as well as the global changes that English itself is undergoing, it is pertinent for language policy makers in the country to start rethinking the language curriculum in the high schools, in particular, instead of insisting on 'linguistic purity.' As indicated earlier, the usage *the other...the other* and the intrusion of independent subject pronouns between a subject and its verb identified in this study are categories of errors that have been documented as syntactic features of Botswana English. The findings of this study are indicative of the need for 'the language teaching policy, tests and exams to take due account of the ways in which English forms a part of the local language ecology' (Norish, 1999: 6).

Teachers also need to closely examine errors and separate those that have fossilised into structurally predictable forms (localisms) from those that are unsystematic and, therefore, unpredictable. English language instruction can then focus on the latter group. To do this effectively, however, the teachers have to keep abreast of the changes in English in Botswana as a previous research has revealed that the teachers themselves do not demonstrate enough awareness of some of the predictable forms peculiar to Botswana (Arua, 2007).

It is important to state that teachers' effort in deciding and selecting aspects of grammatical features of L2 to focus on can only be fruitful if language policy makers recognise the existence of Botswana English and the inevitable manifestations of its characteristics in the language classroom. Exams and tests can then be revised to reflect the new situation. If this line of argument is adopted, teachers 'can then concentrate on ensuring that learners develop the complex skills of language use in multilingual settings' by helping them to master the concepts that they will need for academic success (Norish, 1999:6).

Going by the findings of this study, pronoun number errors will definitely require well planned instruction. This is because of its prevalence amongst 15.9% of the fourth year students as shown in Table 2. Though the expression *the other... the other* ranks next to number errors, with 5.5% of the students in the fourth year still making it, teachers may not have to devote attention to it since its use is common place in the larger society. Two other types of pronoun errors that teachers might wish to focus on in the language classroom are those dealing with gender and case. This is because the categories themselves are considered generally challenging for all learners. Also, the fact that the errors in these two categories reduced significantly in the fourth year essays is an indication that they are unlikely to fossilise.

The third way by which learners can be helped to become proficient in using pronouns is to allow them to assume responsibility for their learning. Learners themselves need to be aware of the potential of the L1 to influence the acquisition of L2 grammatical forms. This will prepare them for the challenges that they are

likely to encounter. In essence, the students will become more responsible for their learning (Harmer, 2006:5).

Conclusion

This study examined some of the syntactic and morphological characteristics of Setswana pronouns, explored how these influenced students' usage of English pronouns and made suggestions on how learners could be helped to use English pronouns proficiently. The methodology involved, firstly, a typological comparison of English and Setswana pronouns. Secondly, samples of essays written by second and fourth year students of the Department of English were analysed for pronoun errors, and thirdly, the likely sources of the errors were discussed.

Seven categories of pronoun errors were observed. These are gender, number and case errors, the conflation of the standard expression *the one...the other* into *the other...the other*, the interposition of subject pronouns between subjects and verbs, pronoun inter substitution and the use of pronouns without antecedents. The findings also revealed that errors of number constituted the highest for both the second and fourth year students although the latter had fewer number errors than the former and, thus, the frequency of distribution of number errors per student in the fourth year was much lower. On the whole, there were fewer pronoun errors in the essays written by fourth year students, an indication that the students overcame some of the difficulties they experienced with pronoun acquisition.

In terms of the implications of the findings, the study has shown that the morphological and syntactic structures of pronouns in Setswana do exert some influence on the students' use of English pronouns. Three of the categories of errors identified: the interposition of independent subject pronouns between subjects and verbs, use of the expression, *the other... the other* and the inter substitution of *they/there/their* correlate directly with the morphological and syntactic structures of Setswana pronouns. Two other types of errors, lack of gender and case distinctions, are associated primarily with the absence of gender and case distinctions in Setswana pronouns and secondarily with the general difficulty associated with these categories. The use of pronouns without antecedents is primarily associated with the tendency to overgeneralise and partially linked with the tendency in Setswana discourse to use agreement markers in place of full pronouns. The last category of pronoun errors, lack of number distinction, has been shown to be predominantly intralingual.

The paper makes three recommendations. The first is that language policy planners need to recognise the nativisation of English in Botswana and reflect this recognition in language teaching policy, tests and exams in the country. Second, teachers are enjoined to closely examine usage and separate those that have fossilised into structurally predictable forms (localisms) from those that are unsystematic and therefore, unpredictable and devote more attention to the latter group. Finally, learners should be encouraged and presented with the opportunity to assume responsibility for their learning.

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1. Introduction

Michael Bakhtin (1894-1975) is a renowned scholar. Inquire and Inquiry editors think that the studies of Bakhtin's language is not a by-product from a particular social context. He thinks all language serves as the real source of human power. Custom, discipline, habit, beliefs, thoughts, and images of the personality, the life-energy and the consciousness in the formation of a particular language are the real source of the power of human language. In the same year, the social feature of language discourse in a well-known novel in the special adapted by the author for his students, which seems to carry out to reflect the social elements of society. Bakhtin provides the necessity of the auxiliary verb of power in order to present ethical and aesthetic elements of the hero. He perceives the source of "dialogism" as being inherent in human language and that the discourse of the author and the discourse of the hero are sociological in nature that these two discourses do not have their own intrinsic whole but are in an overlapping contact and crystallize each other. The author must allow other to proceed for the hero to create his own personality and to make a choice in the world of the hero. The scholar maintains the essential part of his "polyphonic" author.

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