

SOGOKIRÉ NATIVE SPEAKERS' PERSONAL PRONOUN ERRORS IN ENGLISH: AN ERROR ANALYSIS

Gérard MILLOGO

Université Lédéa Bernard OUÉDRAOGO, Burkina Faso

ORCID iD: 0009-0007-5478-0371

gerard_millogo@ujkz.bf

Lallé Michaël ZOUBA

Centre Universitaire de Kaya, Université Joseph KI-ZERBO, Burkina Faso

ORCID iD: 0009-0007-2700-2398

michael.zouba@gmail.com

Relwendé Bernadine ZOUNGRANA

Université Joseph KI-ZERBO

ORCID iD: 0009-0003-8679-1041

zoungadina08@gmail.com

&

Abisoye ELESHIN

Institute of African and Diaspora Studies

University of Lagos, Nigeria

ORCID iD: 0000-0002-3520-2775

aeleshin@unilag.edu.ng

Abstract: This study deals with personal pronoun errors made by Sogokiré native speakers in English. Personal pronouns are considered problematic for Burkinabe students in general and Sogokiré native speakers in particular. It aimed to identify types of errors, to determine the most frequent error type, and explain the causes of these errors. Data were collected from 40 participants, using two tests. A qualitative methodology was employed to analyze their personal pronoun errors in English. We deployed the error analysis theory framework by Gas and Selinker (1994) to guide the analysis. The findings of the study reveal that Sogokiré native speakers made subject and object pronoun errors in English, among which object pronoun errors were the most frequent error type. Additionally, the findings reveal that the errors of the participants were due to inter- and intra-lingual factors. Intralingual errors resulted from overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restriction, simplification, and developmental factors. Interlingual errors resulted from the interference of Sogokiré and French. Based on the findings, some pedagogical suggestions were made.

Keywords: Personal Pronouns, Error analysis, Interlingual errors, Intralingual errors, Sogokiré.

ERREURS DES PRONOMS PERSONNELS EN ANGLAIS CHEZ LES LOCUTEURS NATIFS DU SOGOKIRÉ: UNE ANALYSE DES ERREURS

Résumé : Cette étude traite des erreurs commises par les locuteurs natifs du Sogokiré dans l'emploi des pronoms personnels anglais. Les pronoms personnels sont considérés problématiques par les étudiants burkinabè en général et les locuteurs natifs du sogokiré en particulier. Cette étude a pour objectifs d'identifier les types d'erreurs, de

déterminer le type d'erreur la plus fréquente et d'expliquer les causes de ces erreurs. Les données ont été collectées via deux tests chez 40 participants. Une méthode qualitative a été utilisée pour analyser leurs erreurs dans l'emploi des pronoms personnels anglais. Le cadre théorique d'analyse des erreurs par Gas et Selinker (1994) a été déployé pour guider l'analyse. Les résultats montrent que les locuteurs natifs du sogokiré font des erreurs sur les pronoms personnels sujets et compléments en anglais et les erreurs sur les pronoms personnels compléments étaient les plus fréquentes. Ils révèlent aussi que les erreurs des participants avaient pour cause l'intralanguale et l'interlanguale. La généralisation hâtive, l'ignorance des restrictions de règles, la simplification, et les facteurs développementaux expliquaient les erreurs intralinguales. Les erreurs interlinguales provenaient de l'interférence du sogokiré et du français. Des suggestions au plan pédagogique ont été faites en se fondant sur les résultats.

Mots-clés : Pronoms Personnels, Analyse des Erreurs, Erreurs Interlinguales, Erreur Intralinguales, sogokiré.

Introduction

Personal pronouns are essential components of grammar in every language. In English, personal pronouns encode person, number, gender in discourse, playing a central role in sentence cohesion, reference, and pragmatic meaning (Nelson, 2001). Therefore, the mastery of the English language by foreign language learners such as Sogokiré native speakers also depends on their ability to appropriately use personal pronouns. Difficulties in the use of these pronouns may result in poor communication in the language. Based on feedback from 12 years' experience of teaching English as a foreign language, we observed that English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Burkina Faso Secondary schools encounter difficulties in the use of personal pronouns, which, most of the time, prevent them from improving their English written production. For the Sogokiré-speaking learners of English, who are also Burkinabe students, acquiring full competence in English personal pronoun usage presents persistent challenges. This is obvious as personal pronoun usage has always been problematic for EFL learners (Nokas, 2021). As writing is the most difficult task in English for EFL learners, the difficulties observed from Sogokiré speakers' use of personal pronouns in written English can prevent them from acquiring full competence in written English (Harahap, 2023). In the literature, there is an exhaustive classification of personal pronouns. Some works, such as Stoian (2023), restrict them to a limited set, while others such as (Harahap, 2023; Handayani & Cenderato, 2023) adopt a broader range. Within this exhaustive classification, one aspect on which these researchers agree is that personal pronouns include both subject and object forms. The present study deals with the analysis of errors in personal pronouns, focusing specially on these two personal pronouns categories: subject personal pronouns, and object personal pronouns. The main objective of the study is to analyze errors in personal pronouns by Sogokiré native speakers in English in view of improving their written production. Specific objectives are to: point out the types of Sogokiré native speakers' personal pronoun errors in English; find out the most frequent types of their personal pronoun errors; explain these errors. To reach the above objectives, we ask: what are the types of Sogokiré native speakers' personal pronoun errors? Which of these error

types has the highest frequency of occurrence in their English production? Why do they make these errors? The research hypotheses include: H1: Sogokiré native speakers' personal pronoun errors are subject-pronoun and object-pronoun error types in English. H2: Among their personal pronoun errors, object-pronoun errors are the most frequent error types. H3: Sogokiré native speakers' personal pronoun errors are due to both interlingual and intralingual sources in English.

0.1. Literature Review

In the literature, many scholars examined personal pronoun errors in writing. If works such as Nokas (2021), and Purnomo *et al.* (2024) solely attribute personal pronoun errors to the mother tongue interference, others like Hakidi *et al.* (2021) attribute them to both intralingual and interlingual errors. One aspect commonly shared in the literature is the role of the mother tongue interference in English personal pronoun learning by EFL learners. Hakidi *et al.* (2021) conducted a study on the use of personal pronouns in writing among 15 Indonesian secondary school students (tenth-grade). The findings of their study show that the students made four types of errors (subcategories) including substitution, addition, omission and mis-ordering errors. Among these error types, substitution was the most dominant error type, with 48.84% of the total error percentages, indicating that this error type constitutes the primary challenge for Indonesian learners of English. Additionally, the findings reveal that the students' errors were due to both interlingual and intralingual (incomplete application of rule) errors. They finally show that contextual learning factors such as uninteresting teaching methods and lack of students' motivation constitute one of the causes of error.

Another study by Purnomo *et al.* (2024) examines 16 Indonesian secondary school students' (7th grade) personal pronoun errors. Contrary to Hakidi *et al.* (2021), their findings show that omission errors were the most frequent subcategories (43%), followed by mis-formation (37%), addition (14%), and mis-ordering (7%). They also show that the prominence of omission errors implies that the students struggle with the use of personal pronouns in sentences. Unlike Hakidi *et al.* (2021), their study solely attributes the error causes to the interference of the mother tongue. These differences in the literature can inform readers about how educational level, and language proficiency influence the predominance of error types among learners, where omission errors are common among beginners and mis-formation becoming more prevalent at higher proficiency levels when learners attempt more complex sentence constructions. Similarly, Harahap's (2023) study on personal pronoun errors among 36 Indonesian secondary school students (tenth-grade) acknowledges the predominance of omission errors (36.84%) among the total errors categories, followed by mis-formation (32.10%), addition (20.74%), and mis-ordering (10.62%). These findings significantly differ from Hakidi *et al.* (2021), implying how number of participants in the study can influence the predominance of error subcategories. The study finally attributes the errors to interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, learning context factors, and teaching problems.

Unlike the above literatures, Pratiwi's (2019) on personal pronoun errors made by 9 secondary school students (11th grade) finds only two error subcategories where substitution errors constitute the most dominant (68%), followed by omission (32%). The non-existence of addition and mis-ordering errors in this study might be due to the sample size, or more-context-dependent related. Other studies such as Nokas (2021), and Handayani and Cenderato (2023) examine personal pronoun error categories among EFL learners. Findings in Nokas (2021) reveal that the learners made four error categories including reflexive pronouns, object pronouns, possessive pronouns, and subject pronouns. Among these categories, subject pronouns were the most frequent error type, representing 72.10% of all errors, followed by object pronoun errors (70.20%), possessive pronoun errors (67.80%), and reflexive errors (64.70%). This indicates that subject pronoun usage poses great challenges to EFL learners. The findings of the study conclude that these errors were solely due to interference of the mother tongue, where this mother tongue interference led the learners from using subject and object pronouns interchangeably. Unlike Nokas (2021), findings in Handayani and Cenderato (2023) reveal that reflexive pronouns were the most frequent error category, followed by object pronoun errors, possessive pronoun errors, and subject pronoun errors. The findings of the study show that these errors were due to both interlingual and intralingual transfer.

The above studies point to the need for further research on a broader range of personal pronouns error types and their sources among EFL learners. However, the present study focuses specifically on personal pronoun subject and object usage by Sogokiré native speakers learning English in Burkina Faso secondary schools. Existing literature addresses personal pronoun usage among EFL learners more generally, but no study to date has examined this phenomenon among Burkinabe students, and Sogokiré learners in particular. To fill this gap, the present study analyses personal pronoun errors in English among Sogokiré-speaking secondary school learners, with attention to error types and their sources. Since Sogokiré has distinct pronominal and morphosyntactic features that differ from English (Millogo, 2026), and because Burkinabe secondary-school teaching contexts may shape learner output in specific ways, investigating this population can reveal error patterns not visible in studies of other EFL contexts.

0.2. Theoretical Framework

The present study deploys an error analysis theory to analyse the students' errors, using Gas and Selinker's (1994) framework. This includes (1) collection of a sample of learners' language, (2) identification of errors, (3) classification of errors, (4) quantification of errors, (5) analysis of source of errors, and (6) remediation of errors. In this study the framework has been adapted as follows: collection of a sample of learners' language, Identification of errors, classification of errors, quantification of errors, and analysis of source of errors. Apart from the first step, which concerned the collection of the sample from the participants, the next four steps guided our analysis. The framework advocates that error can be classified into categories and sub-categories and quantified according to their frequency of occurrence. In the present study, errors were classified into personal pronoun categories and subcategories. At the level of identification of errors, some researchers make the

difference between errors and mistakes. The present study does not differentiate errors from mistakes and considers any deviation from language norms as an error, since distinguishing between errors and mistakes is often a difficult, if not practically impossible, task. If some literatures like Hubbard *et al.* (1983), and Richards and Schmidt (2010) attempted to make the difference between an error and a mistake, Jung (2013) finds it difficult to practically make this difference.

0.3. Methodology and Research design

In this study, we deployed a qualitative methodology to conduct an in-depth analysis of personal pronoun difficulties in English among Sogokiré native speakers. Creswell defines qualitative research as “collecting data based on words from a small number of individuals so that the participants’ views are obtained” (2012: 16). Data were collected from 40 Sogokiré native speakers who were learning English in 3e classes in Burkina Faso secondary schools; participation was voluntary and based on availability. The participants included 25 boys and 15 girls. They were also informed about the confidentiality of the information gathered. Gender in this study serves only to ensure representativeness. Data were collected in three schools in the Satiri Commune from 10 to 30 June 2026, using tests on personal pronoun usage. Participants were asked to write sentences of their own using personal pronoun subjects and objects, varying the types of sentences and tenses and aspects. Instruments were administered separately and their papers were anonymous. One research assistant helped us to collect the data because there were four Junior Secondary schools in the study location. The data were analysed using thematic analysis. In qualitative method, the data are analyzed “for description and themes using text analysis and interpreting the larger meaning of the findings” (Creswell, 2012: 16). The data were analyzed following Gas and Selinker’s (1994) error analysis framework. During the analysis, some excerpts containing students’ personal pronoun errors were presented using Learners’ Production (LP) followed by Expected Production (EP). The learners’ error causes are explained in reference to the literature and Millogo (2026). For intralingual errors, we referred to the existing literature, whereas, for interlingual errors, we referred to Millogo (2026), that deals with the description of personal pronouns in Sogokiré and their comparison to the English counterparts. Tables showing percentages of error types were presented in the work below.

1. Results

The findings of the study are presented in line with the research objectives. They include the types of Sogokiré native speakers’ personal pronoun errors and their quantification. They also include the sources of the participants’ errors.

1.1 Types of Sogokiré native speakers’ personal pronoun errors

Sogokiré native speakers made various errors in their written productions, but for the purpose of this study only personal pronoun (subjects and objects) errors were analyzed, quantified and classified into categories and subcategories. The following tables present the error categories and subcategories.

Table 1: Error categories related to personal pronouns usage

Error Categories	Total per category	Percentage per category
Object errors	95	63%
Subject errors	55	37%
Total	150	100%

Source: Data collected from Sogokiré native speakers in 3e classes from 10 to 30 June 2026

Table 2: Error subcategories related to personal pronouns usage

Error-subcategories	Total error per subcategory	Percentage error per subcategory
object Substitution errors	70	47%
object omission errors	5	3%
object addition errors	10	7%
object order	10	7%
Subject Substitution errors	15	10%
Subject omission errors	12	8%
Subject Addition errors	3	2%
Subject order errors	25	17%
Total errors	150	100%

Source: data collected from Sogokiré native speakers in 3e classes from 10 to 30 June 2026

The aforementioned tables present the different personal pronoun errors made by Sogokiré native speakers learning English in 3e classes. We identified a total of 150 personal pronoun errors from the participants' written productions, and we classified them into categories and subcategories. Table 1 shows two categories of errors including subject errors and object errors. Among the two categories, object errors were the most prominent ones, representing 63% of all errors. Subject errors constitute 37% of the total percentage errors. The high rate of object errors indicate that the participants have serious difficulties in their usage compared to subject personal pronouns. Table 2 shows the different error subcategories in Sogokiré native speakers' English written productions. Among all the subcategories, object substitution errors were the most frequent error subcategory, with 47% of all errors, followed by subject mis-ordering, representing 17% of all errors. The next frequent error subcategory was subject substitution errors followed by subject omission errors (8%). Addition and order errors affecting object pronouns occurred 7% each. The lowest error subcategories constitute object omission errors and subject addition errors, occurring respectively 5 (3%) and 3 (2%) times. The high percentage of object substitution error occurrence implies that Sogokiré native speakers struggle in object pronoun selection during their sentence production.

1.2 Sogokiré native speakers' personal pronoun error sources

In this section, we analyze the causes of the different personal pronoun categories presented above. Two main sources of errors have been identified which are presented as follows:

- Interlingual errors

This main error cause consists of the interference of the students' mother tongue which is Sogokiré and the influence of their intermediary language, namely French.

The interference of Sogokiré

- 1) LP: * Why **me** write to **they**
EP: Why do I write to them.....?
- 2) LP: ***Her** knows these people
EP: She knows these people
- 3) LP: *You have been **he** waiting
EP: You have been waiting for him.....

The above sentences present personal pronoun sentences. Examples 1) and 2) show subject pronoun substitution errors, where 'I' and 'she' are substituted by their object pronoun counterparts. These errors stem from Sogokiré interference because in Sogokiré, the object and the subject pronouns are orthographically represented by one item. For examples, 'à' entails 'I', and 'me', 'i' means 'they' and 'them', and 'à' is 'she' and 'her'. In Sogokiré no distinction is made between object and subject pronouns (Millogo, 2026). Therefore, the participants transferred this knowledge in English, leading them to produce errors. In example 3), there are both object substitution and order errors. Here again, the participants have transferred their knowledge of Sogokiré personal pronouns into English. As mentioned earlier, the object and the subject reflect one item in Sogokiré, whereas in English they are separated. Additionally, Sogokiré object pronouns are preverbal (Millogo, 2026), whereas the English ones are postverbal. For instance,

à mà biri
/he/she / us/ insult/

"he/she insulted us"

(Millogo, 2026: 150)

The reference to Sogokiré object pronoun usage by the participants led them into making error.

The interference of French

- 4) LP: *The chicken is here, I do not eat **him**
EP: The chicken is here, I do not eat it
- 5) LP: *The meat is ready, she has cooked **her**
EP: The meat is ready, she has cooked it
- 6) LP: *You **you** will have done since 8 h.....

EP: You will have done the exercise since 8 O' clock

- 7) LP: *When you **her** have called

EP: When have you called her?

The aforementioned sentences show object and subject errors. In 4) and 5), the object pronoun 'it' is substituted by 'him' and 'her', whereas 7) shows mis-ordering of the object pronoun. These are cases of interlingual errors resulting from French influence. If some participants have acquired the order of the object pronouns in English but still need to master their selection (examples 4) and 5)), others still need to master their order in sentences (example 7)). The gender system has influenced the participants in the object pronoun selection. In French, direct object can be 'le' for masculine and 'la' for feminine, regardless of whether the reference is human or non-human, whereas, in English, third-person singular pronouns distinguish sex for human referents (he/she) and use 'it' for non-human referents. Because words such as 'poulet' (chicken) and 'viande' (meat) have masculine and feminine grammatical gender in French, respectively, they can therefore be replaced in French by 'le' (him) and 'la' (her), which may lead learners to select incorrect English pronouns by analogy. This is a language contact situation and its output.

For example :

Le garçon, je le vois

/Det/Boy/ I/ him/ see/

The boy, I can see him

Le tableau, je le vois

/Det/board/ I/ him/ see/

The board, I can see it

The participants transferred the object pronoun knowledge in English which resulted in errors. In example 6), there is a subject pronoun addition error. In this sentence, the participants want to insist on the action being performed by the subject. This insistence led them into reduplicating the subject. This is a case of interlingual error due to French interference. In colloquial French, the insistence is often made by the use of the object pronoun (strong form like 'toi' = 'you' 'moi' = 'me') plus the subject pronoun. In 6), the participants reduplicated the pronoun 'you', as 'you' represents the subject 'you', object 'you', and object strong form 'you'. Therefore, the participants' reference to the colloquial structure negatively influenced their personal pronoun usage.

-Intralingual errors

- 8) LP: *She speaks **you**

EP: She speaks with you

- 9) LP: *Do you gave **X me?**

EP: Did you give it to me?

- 10) LP: *Are you going **it?**

EP: Are you going home?

- 11) LP: *Didn't **X** speech Allemand?

EP: Didn't you speak German?

- 12) LP: *Was **he** opened?
EP: Was it opened?
- 13) LP: *We have been waiting **me**
EP: We have been waiting for you
- 14) LP: *Why **you** are not come
EP: Why are you not coming?
- 15) LP: *I love **me**
EP: I love myself

The above erroneous show subject and object pronoun errors. Examples 8) and 9) present object errors. These are cases of intralingual errors resulting from incomplete application of the personal pronoun rules. In 8), the participants hypothesize that the object pronoun must be placed mechanically after the verb, regardless of the type of verb. In this example, the participants have not fully applied the rule which involves the addition of preposition before the object pronouns with certain verbs to maintain semantics in the sentence. In 9), the participants have not fully applied the object pronoun rule in this ditransitive sentence, which requires the use of two object pronouns. In 12), 13) and 15), the participants made substitution errors. These errors are intralingual due to ignorance of rule restriction. In these erroneous sentences, the participants ignore the restriction of object and subject pronoun selection by the main verb of the sentences. In 13), the participants were to use separate pronouns, whereas the verb of 15) imposes the use of reflexive pronoun when the subject and the object reflect the same person. In example 12), the participants ignore that the subject pronoun cannot undergo the action of the verb. The erroneous sentence, in 12), can be a case of Sogokiré interference, as there is no distinction between the third-person singular in Sogokiré. Their ignorance of these rule led them into producing erroneous sentences. In 10), there is an object addition. In this sentence, the participants have overgeneralized the use of the pronoun. They have overgeneralized the object pronoun to intransitive verbs, which do not require the use of object pronouns.

In 11) and 14), there are subject pronoun omission and subject pronoun order errors. Example 11) is a case of simplification, where the participants omit the subject pronoun to avoid negative interrogation complex rule. According to Mukattash (1981), Omission errors occur when participants try to simplify complex rules. The example in 14) is an instance of intralingual error due to developmental factors. Such errors are also found in the speech of native speakers during early language acquisition. In particular, Wh-questions are often problematic for young children acquiring English as their first language. As Richard notes, children “are able to make questions which do not require a *wh* word such as *where* or *why*. They have no difficulty in saying *Can he ride in a truck?* but when they use a *wh* word they fail to change the word order and produce *What he can ride in?*” (1971: 2). Similarly, this pattern is observable among Sogokiré speakers at the early stages of English language learning.

2. Discussion

This section discusses the main findings of the study in line with the research questions. The findings show that Sogokiré speakers made 150 errors related to personal pronouns in English written productions. These errors were classified into two categories. The first category involves personal pronoun subject errors, whereas the second category consist of personal pronoun object errors. The great number of personal pronoun error occurrence in the participants' written production implies that they are confronted with many challenges in their personal pronouns learning in English. In particular, learners tend to confuse subject and object forms, by selecting inappropriate pronouns. Previous findings in Harahap (2023) show these challenges in personal pronouns usage among other EFL learners. Regarding the second research question, object pronouns appear to be the most frequent error types among Sogokiré speakers in English productions. This is inconsistent with the findings in Nokas (2021) which reveal that subject pronouns appear to be the most frequent error type among other EFL learners' English productions. Among the subcategories, substitution errors appear to be the most prominent error subcategory, representing about 57% of all errors. This is consistent with evidence from comparable studies on personal pronoun errors showing that substitution errors are the most problematic subcategory for EFL learners in English writings (Pratiwi, 2019; and Hakidi *et al.*, 2021).

As for causes, errors were best explained by the combination of intralingual and interlingual factors. In this study, interlingual errors occurred when learners apply Sogokiré and French pronoun patterns in English. The findings reveal that participants' errors were due to the interlingual errors (interference from Sogokiré and French (the participants' intermediary language), and intralingual errors (incomplete application of the rule, overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restriction, simplification, and developmental factors). These findings echo Hakidi *et al.* (2021), Harahap (2023), and Handayani and Cenderato's (2023), whose study likewise identify these two sources of errors. The convergence of these findings suggests that pronoun errors are not random, but reflect both cross-linguistic transfer and learners' incomplete control of the English grammatical rules.

The first hypothesis states that the personal pronoun errors in Sogokiré native speakers' written production are object-pronoun errors and subject-pronoun errors, whereas the second hypothesis stipulates object pronoun errors are the most frequent error type. As for the third, it states that errors are due to both intralingual and interlingual sources. Based on the findings, the three hypotheses are confirmed. This implies that personal pronouns, particularly, object pronouns, should be a focal point in teaching English personal pronouns to Sogokiré native speakers.

Conclusion

The present study examines the error occurrence in personal pronouns in English among Sogokiré native speakers. The main objective was to analyse their personal pronoun errors in view of improving their usage in English. The findings of the study reveal that Sogokiré native speakers made 150 personal pronouns errors in English, including subject pronoun and object pronoun errors, among which object pronoun errors were most frequent. The results of the study also show that Sogokiré native speakers' errors in English were due

to both intralingual (incomplete application of the rule, overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restriction, simplification, and developmental factors) and interlingual errors (Sogokiré and French interferences). Overall, the results show that Sogokiré native speakers' errors in English personal pronouns are systematic and predictable. They reflect the interaction between language transfer and learner development. These errors imply that Sogokiré native speakers struggle with the use of personal pronouns in English, which can prevent them from acquiring full competence in written English. Therefore, teaching English personal pronouns to Sogokiré native speakers should place more emphasis on explicit explanation, contrastive analysis, and guided practice in the use of English personal pronouns.

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