

The Competency-Based Approach and the EFL Learner: An Analysis of Common Grammatical Errors by Terminale Students of “GHS Biyem-Assi” and College Vogt

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Abstract: This paper entitled “The Competency-Based Approach and the EFL Learner: An Analysis of Common Grammatical Errors of Terminale Students in GHS Biyem-Assi, College Vogt sets out to examine the grammatical errors of Terminale EFL learners of some selected schools in Yaounde, within the CBA teaching/learning context. The Error Analysis perspective to language analysis was adopted for this article. Data was collected from 100 essays and also through a teacher questionnaire and an interview. The 100 participants were asked to write an essay on specific topics. Errors from the essays were identified and classified under various categories such as prepositions, nouns and determiners. A questionnaire of 15 questions was administered to 10 teachers to seek their opinions on the sources of learners’ errors. Eight teachers were interviewed. The results revealed so many grammatical and structural deviations in EFL students’ writings even though exposed to CBA. Most of the errors were noticeable in the learners’ use of verbs. It was realised that EFL students get to secondary school with very little knowledge of the English language use and this affects their writings. The poor performance of EFL Learners in grammar even though being exposed to the CBA Teaching/Learning method can be attributed to the fact that CBA was this year at its first implementation in Terminales classes and no precise course book or programme is designed to fit the teaching/learning needs.

Keywords: CBA, EFL, Analysis and grammatical errors.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Language teaching and learning is basically done through a thoughtful process, which takes into account not only the teaching and learning environment but most, especially, the teaching/learning methods. The educational system in Cameroon has undergone major reforms as far as the teaching/learning methods are concerned. From the traditional grammar translation method through the Skill Based Approach (SBA) the Cameroonian educational system has adopted many

teaching/learning methods. In 2012, the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) was introduced at the expense of the Skill Based Approach (SBA) that was, until then, the mainstream approach in teaching and learning. CBA implementation brought in new school programmes, recommended by the Ministry of Secondary Education and directly implemented by pedagogic inspectors.

The Competency-Based Approach focuses on competencies gained by an individual at the end of a

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learning process rather than the learning process itself. Rodgers (2002:141), refers to the competency-based approach as an "educational movement that focuses on the outcomes or outputs of learning in the development of language programmes". It also focuses on learning and learners' activities rather than the teacher's role. The CBA thus is essentially learner-centred and works naturally emphasising on concrete skills (Competencies), facilitating the learner's social integration process. The teacher, therefore, focuses on learners' productions and mainly uses their linguistic input to develop specific competencies. Nkemleke and Belibi (2019:114), stipulate that "CBA will equip learners with competencies that will enable them to meet the demands of day-to-day communication and contribute to sustainable development". With the CBA, learners do not only acquire knowledge in class but have to be able to use the knowledge out of the classroom. The rareness of English-speaking facilities in francophone classes makes it difficult for francophone learners of EFL to learn and properly use the English grammar daily, thus hindering their mastery as well as their performance.

Although this learning method sounds outstanding for effective Teaching/Learning, it is worth mentioning that the teaching/learning method of foreign languages is still very challenging to EFL Learners no matter the efficiency of the teaching method, of the learning environment, and reputability of the learning conditions. In the Cameroonian context, Francophone learners of English at the secondary level still find the teaching/learning very challenging be it orally or written. Our focus in this study is on the written aspect and most especially at the level of grammar. The different grammatical errors that Francophone learners of English in Cameroon make, have drawn the attention of many researchers such as Zé Amvela (1999), Bobda Simo (2002), Paul Mbangwana (2004), Jean-Paul Kouega (2005), Fornkwa (2013), Piewo Sokeng (2014) and others. Most of them attribute the different deviant forms in the written language of Cameroonian Francophone learners of English to social, linguistic, psychological and pedagogical factors.

To be able to use a language properly, one has to master its grammar, which is according to the researcher, the most essential part in learning a language. English occupies the status of a foreign Language for Francophone learners of English in Cameroon both at the primary and secondary levels. The English Language is taught in the francophone subsystem of education at the secondary level for seven years. After such a long period of studies, one would expect every francophone student who has successfully gone through this system to express

him/herself appropriately in English. With the achievement of competencies, the learner is expected to show improved performance in examinations. It is rather unfortunate that EFL learners fail to rightfully make use of appropriate grammatical notions; definitely, there is a problem. According to Brown (2000), to master the English language, learners have to be adequately exposed to all of the four basic skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. In all, they need to know what the internationally accepted English is, apart from the variety used in Cameroon. According to James (1988), errors in writing such as tenses, prepositions and weak vocabulary are the most common and frequent type of errors that are committed by EFL learners. The problem is therefore clear; the appropriate use of grammatical elements in a CBA context still stands as a barrier to EFL learners in Cameroon.

Research Hypotheses

In an attempt to answer these questions, we shall rely on the following hypotheses:

RH 1: EFL learners find it difficult to adapt the CBA method to grammatical rules.

RH2: EFL learners do not speak nor write the English language out of the classroom situation and do not adapt to the CBA method while using the language.

RH3: The frequency of usage of the English language has a direct impact on learner performances in examinations.

RH4: The more learners use the English Language in RLS, the better their performance in assessments.

Theoretical Framework

The framework adopted for the analysis of this paper is the Error Analysis theory.

The Error Analysis Theory

This study uses the Error Analysis (EA) theoretical framework of Corder's (1974) explanation of errors and mistakes. According to him errors occur because of gaps in the learner's English knowledge, whereas Ellis (2005:62), perceives that mistakes occur when the learner has not yet learned how to master a certain grammatical form. The distinction between errors and mistakes is not easily made in the analysis of data, and it makes it difficult to detect an error in a text. However, Corder (ibid) created a certain analytical tool that one can use in order to find errors in texts which he calls *Error Analysis*. It was the British applied linguist, Pit Corder, who re-focuses attention on errors from the perspective of language processing and language acquisition. In his seminal paper, *the significance of learners' errors* (1969), he stresses the learner's positive cognitive contribution to learning. His view is that the learner is engaged in a process of discovering the language. The learner forms hypotheses based on language input and tests those

hypotheses in speech production. In this view, errors are not only inevitable, but also, very importantly, a necessary feature of learner language, without which improvement cannot occur. Viewed as such, error analysis fits better for the theoretical framework of this study.

Error analysis is a branch of applied linguistics that emerged in the sixties to demonstrate that learners' errors were not only because of the learner's native languages, but also reflected some universal learning strategies. Richards and Schmidt (2010), define Error Analysis (EA) as the study and analysis of the errors made by second-language learners. EA may be carried out in order to identify strategies which learners use in language learning, to try to identify the causes of learner errors and obtain information on common difficulties in language learning, to act as an aid to teaching or in the preparation of teaching materials.

Ellis & Barkhuizen (2005:51), also describe Error analysis as "a set of procedures for identifying, describing and explaining learners' errors". It is vital to pinpoint that Error Analysis is not only about identifying and detecting errors, but actually trying to explain why they are made. When investigating second language learners' material, there are several methods that one can use to collect data for the research. According to Ellis & Barkhuizen (ibid: 51), the best method to investigate second language acquisition is by collecting samples of the learner's productive English. The written production reveals the learner's grammatical knowledge and provides evidence of how much the learner really knows which makes essays a perfect sample.

This work therefore is based on error analysis which differs from contrastive analysis and other error theories. It studies errors, determines the causes and sources of their occurrence, their typologies and classifications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A wide range of materials have been found relating to this paper. Review of related literature is one of the significant aspects of research. It enables the researcher to know the amount of work done in the concerned area as well as the unknown and unexplored area. The researcher must be aware of the knowledge generated and the on-going process of knowledge generation for better clarity of the problem and an insight into its methodological issues. It forms the basis of the problem under investigation, and helps the researcher to arrive the intended perspective of the study. The present study is based on the *"The Competency-Based Approach and the EFL Learner: An Analysis of Common Grammatical Errors by Terminale Students of 'GHS Biyem-Assi'"*.

The researcher, for this purpose, went through studies dealing with the teaching of the English language to francophone learners under the framework of the Competency-Based Approach. The researcher came across the following studies done in Cameroon between 2012 and 2019 on the implementation of the CBA and the various aspects of English language teaching as well as the problems faced by the teachers and learners in English language teaching/learning.

Ngufor (2012), researches on the effects of a multilingual environment on the learning of English language in some secondary schools in Cameroon and examine the effects of a multilingual environment on the learning of English language and discovers that the presence of many languages distorts the English of students, especially at the levels of pronunciation, spelling and grammar in general. It is equally revealed that teachers are another cause of students' poor performance in English language and proposes certain solutions which could help solve these problems.

Muluh (2012), in a study entitled *"The Competency-based Approach to English Language Education and the Walls between the Classroom and the Society in Cameroon: Pulling Down the Walls"*, contended that English as a foreign language in the classrooms at all the levels of education is not adapted to the everyday communication needs of the Cameroonian learners, and that an English language pedagogy of integration, otherwise known as the outcomes approach or the Competency-Based Approach can solve the problem. This approach aims at providing linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the language learned. According to his study, walls seem to exist between the knowledge learners get in the classrooms and the implementation of the knowledge in the real-world society for which that knowledge is destined. Literature in the domain of attitudes and motivation shows that learners are predisposed to learn the language. A critical examination of the syllabus reveals that it spells out laudable learning outcomes or expectations and that it has adequate communicative approach recommendations for teachers.

Also, Puspitasari (2012), carries out research to find out the common morphological and syntactical errors made by foreign language students in the English Education Department of the Yogyakarta State University. The analysis shows that morphological and syntactic errors comprise big number of errors in his study and the occurrence of syntactic error is higher than the morphological one. He distinguished two main causes of the students' errors: the influence of their mother tongue and the

lack of grammatical competence in the target language. The two major causes of errors result in inter-lingual errors and intra-lingual errors.

Isabelli-García and Slough (2012), go further by distinguishing the mean rate of missed obligatory use of the definite article which is cultural, situation, structural and textual. They affirm that time spent studying the English non-generic definite article does increase accuracy rates across all these categories.

Furthermore, Jaika (2013), examines the teaching style on the academic performance of learners in an English language classroom. Her study also seeks to bring out the difficulties faced by teachers in transmitting knowledge to learners. Her findings show that students who are taught using different teaching techniques perform better than those who are taught using just one teaching technique. It was also reveal in the research that teachers hardly change their teaching styles thus causing learners lack of concentration and loss of interest during lessons. She, therefore, recommends the use of a variety of teaching techniques in different aspects of language.

Sokeng (2014), also carries out an investigation on the difficulties that bilingual level 1 Francophone student in the Department of Bilingual Studies of the University of Yaounde I face in English. Her analysis reveals that the informants had evidential shortfalls in English grammar. Findings showed that the most salient grammatical errors which were found in the students' essays include: verb tense and form, subject-verb agreement, prepositions, word order, plurality, articles, passive voice, auxiliaries and double negation. These results shows that the teaching and learning of English writing skill of secondary students in Cameroonian primary and secondary schools need more reinforcement and development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

It describes the methodology used to carry out this study. First, it presents the geographical location of the study. Secondly, the target population is described. Then, the research design and tools used for data collection are presented.

Geographical Location of the Study

This study mainly focuses on francophone learners of English and is carried out in the outskirt of Yaounde, in the Centre region of Cameroon. Two schools were selected including a public school and a missionary school. The Gouvernement High School (GHS) Biyem-Assi is located after Carrefour Scalom, and "college VOGT" after Carrefour Vogt towards Shell Nsimyong.

Population of Study

Our target population is the French-speaking secondary school students of English. For our results to be representative enough of the level of all those students, we decided to focus our study on terminale students because they are at the end of the secondary school programme in English Language. Furthermore, we restricted our investigation to schools of Yaoundé because of the accessibility.

The public school was selected using the simple random sampling. In this technique, any item of the population has the equal chance to become the sample. The The Gouvernement High School (GHS) Biyem-Assi was, therefore, chosen among many other high schools of the town.

The selection of the mission school, however, was done using the purposive sampling technique. This technique consists of selecting a sample of the population based on our knowledge of the group to be sampled. The purpose, while selecting a second school, was to find a school where the students had an assumed perfect follow-up more than that of public schools. After our investigation, our devotion went on Collège Vogt which, according to the researcher, is a well regimented school.

In addition to the students, a sampling of the teachers of the three schools was done. The number and gender of the students are presented below:

• The students

One hundred and fifty (150) students' scripts were collected from several schools but, just one hundred and fifteen of them (115) were exploitable. Fifty (50) students from each school were approached.

Table 1: Number of Students

	GHS Biyem Assi	College VOGT	Total
Number of students	50	50	100
Percentage	33.33	33.33	100%

Out of the total of 150 students we had, 48 were male students (12 from the Government school, and 16 from college VOGT) and 102 were female (38

from the Government school, and 34 from college VOGT).

Table 2: Distribution of Students' Informants in terms of Gender

	Female	Male	Total
GHS Biyem Assi	38	12	50
College VOGT	34	16	50
Percentage	72	28	100%

- The teachers**

The teachers were drawn from various institutions. They were 05 teachers from GHS Biyem-

Assi, and 03 from College VOGT, thus, giving a total of ten (8) teachers.

Table 3: Distribution of Informants (Teachers) in Terms of Gender and Number

Gender	Female	Male	Total
Teachers' number	03	05	8
Percentage	30%	70%	100%

Table 4: Teachers' experience of teaching

Experience (years)	From 1 to 4	From 5 to 9	From 10 to 14	From 15 to 19	From 20 to 25	Total
Teachers' number	03	01	03	01	02	10
Percentage	33%	10%	33%	10%	10%	100%

Their experience in teaching ranges from 1 to 23 years. Almost all the teachers in the targeted classes have been teaching English for more than five

years, that is to say they have enough experience in dealing with composition strategies.

Table 5: Teachers' background

Background	Francophone	Anglophone	Total
Teachers' number	05	03	8
Percentage	70%	30%	100%

Five teachers have been trained in the Francophone sub-system of education, while three were from the Anglophone subsystem.

Table 6: Teachers' status

Status	Trained teachers	Non-trained teachers	Total
Teachers' number	5	03	8
Percentage	70%	30%	100%

Five teachers were trained teachers and three were not from a professional school.

Research Design

For this study, we found it appropriate to use the experimental research design. This design perfectly suits the needs of our study as it involves the manipulation of variables in order to check the validity of the hypothesis. It also allows the evaluation of causal relationships among variables. This design, as respected by this study, also includes a random assignment to groups, while all other variables are eliminated or controlled.

This study also uses a descriptive research method and it can be categorised under the deductive approach. Macmillan and Schumacher (1993:35), suggest that "research using a descriptive design, describes an existing phenomenon by using numbers to characterise individuals or a group". This study

describes and aims to explain phenomena that occur naturally without the intervention of an experiment. Although the research context was controlled to a degree, the data were collected from a naturally occurring group of subjects.

This study involves both qualitative and quantitative aspects of research traditions. In qualitative research, things are observed and studied in their natural settings. It involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter and gives priority to what the data contribute to important research questions or existing information. In its qualitative aspect, this study has a limited number of participants and written documents of the students are used. Quantitative research, on the other hand, refers to the systematic empirical investigation of quantitative properties and phenomena and their relationships. In its quantitative aspect, this study involves statistical analysis of numerical data.

Variables

This study is based on two variables: an independent variable and a dependent variable. The independent variable is the real-life usage of the English language out of the classroom situation, whereas the dependent variable is the performance of students in assessments. Other variables identified as extraneous, that is, susceptible to alter the results of the experiment were identified and isolated. These extraneous variables include the state of implementation of CBA in the schools, the teachers' training, the learners' motivation and attitudes towards the English language as well as learner differences. The information provided by teachers and students through questionnaires permitted us to limit the influence of extraneous variables.

Research Instruments

The research instruments used for this investigation involved questionnaires and interviews administered to groups of students and teachers from each school. Questionnaires were administered to the 100 students and to 10 teachers. The researcher administered the questionnaire himself and made sure that every respondent did fill it on the spot. Students were assisted where necessary and where it required some help in their attempt to respond to some questions. In addition, discussions with teachers were important aspects of data collection.

Data Collection Procedures

At the initial stage of data collection, authorisation was obtained from the respective school principals and teachers of English, to allow for a writing activity. Once the authorisation was obtained, permission was sought from the teachers of the targeted classes in the three secondary schools involved, to allow 15-25 minutes of the English lesson time to remind students on the various essay writing techniques. The teachers were cooperative and willing to participate in accomplishing this study. At the same time, a questionnaire exploring teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards their students' mastery of English grammar was given to English teachers who were asked to submit it the next day.

A unique data collection sheet was established and shared to all the participants. All of them received an answer sheet on which four different essay topics were proposed. Participants were required to say something on the following topics:

1. Introduce and present yourself.
2. Are you for or against homosexuality: Say whether you like or dislike homosexuality, as opposed to normal sexuality.
3. What do you think about tribalism?
4. "The Anglophone problem in Cameroon".

There are various ways of collecting data when one undergoes a research. Depending on the type of research design, there are specific tools that a researcher must use.

The current study employs a mixed method design, which includes both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Such a method integrates both approaches to provide a much more detailed and comprehensive picture of that which is being investigated. In this study, the qualitative data (interview) was conducted after the quantitative data collection to foster understanding and interpretation of the results.

During the process of the research, the researcher used elicitation method. He first gave explanations to students about writing narrative text, and then, he gave them assignment to write the composition. After that, the researcher read every composition, identified the errors and classified them and then analysed them.

After receiving more information on the essay writing exercise, students were free to ask the orthographical renderings of words, they had difficulties to spell out, and given that they are francophone, expressions and words from the students were also translated from French to English in order to facilitate their understanding of the topics.

Terminale A and D students of College Vogt actively took part in the exercise, and asked many questions, and also had difficulties in translating their expressions from French to English. For the Terminale C, participants of the same school, they were really engaged and disposed themselves in examination conditions. Out of a total of 50 students in this class, just a few of them effectively asked questions. The participants of College Vogt had a high sense of responsibility and enabled us obtain our desire data.

After the selection and analyses of the 100 essays, 65 essays written in the proficiency exam were examined in terms of the grammatical errors, given the other 35 other scripts were empty. Grammatical errors in the essays were examined and counted manually by the researcher in order to use an objective procedure for the identification of the different errors. Each error type was identified under its relevant category. Examples of each type of error were recorded separately. The total number of errors was counted and their frequencies were calculated.

• Students' Essay Compositions

The corpus on which this study is based included 100 essays out of which 35 essays were excluded due to incomprehensibility and illegibility.

90 essays were targeted of approximately 120 to 200 words each, written in three secondary school classes. The purpose of collecting the samples was to analyse the most common grammatical errors made by EFL learners of English.

• **The Teachers' Questionnaire**

The teacher's questionnaire was set in English. It was made up of 15 questions divided into three parts.

The first part concerned personal information about the respondent such as the gender, the background or the experience.

The second part of the questionnaire dealt with teaching questions properly. The teachers were asked if they taught English grammar, the methods used to teach the course given there is no specific designed CBA method in Terminale.

The last part tackled the teachers' opinion on the mastery of grammar by the learners and the reasons for such a situation. They were then asked to provide some solutions to improve on both the teaching and the learning of English questions.

• **The teachers' interviews**

Semi structured interviews with teachers of English were administered, so as to obtain qualitative data regarding students' mastery of English grammar.

Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Results

This section qualitatively and quantitatively analyses the data collected from EFL learners from two schools. Statistical responses from essays and various types of errors as they appear in the essays are analysed. The results of the error analysis are presented in different categories depending on their frequency in the collected and analysed material. An overview of error identification is first presented, followed by a presentation of the different error categories and of results.

Error Identification

In order to analyse the types of various grammatical errors in students' essays, the errors were identified and categorised into different error types and the researcher corrected 100 writing samples that served as a pilot for this study. The corpus on which this study is based included 100 essays out of which 35 essays were excluded due to incomprehensibility and illegibility. 90 essays were targeted of approximately 120 to 200 words each, written in two secondary school classes. The purpose of collecting the samples was to analyse the most common grammatical errors made by EFL learners of

English. The researcher used their completed score sheets to calculate errors. According to Huang (2002), absolute frequencies refer to the actual occurrence of errors, expressed by natural numbers. The errors were counted and rated in percentage of frequency.

Types of Errors

James (1998), establishes the following types of errors: Grammatical errors, Lexical errors, Substance errors, Semantic errors, Syntactic errors, Addition Errors, Disordering Errors, and Overgeneralisation.

Grammatical errors

Richard Nordquist coined grammatical errors as a term used in prescriptive grammar to describe an instance of faulty, unconventional, or controversial usage, such as a misplaced modifier or an inappropriate verb. They are also called Usage errors. These errors include (articles, nouns, pronouns, verbs, possessive case, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions).

Substance errors

They are made up of errors within the framework, dealing with poor capitalisation of words, poor and abusive punctuations, and spelling errors. All these mentioned elements constitute a highly problematic situation to English learners.

Lexical errors

Lexical errors are errors in the choice of words. They can be resolved simply by exchanging an inappropriate word for a better one, with no change to the order of words and no need to add or subtract other words around. They include (word selection and word formation).

Syntactic errors

They occur during the parsing of input code, and are caused by grammatically incorrect statements. They might be an illegal character in the input, a missing operator, two statements on the same line with no intervening semicolon, unbalanced parentheses, a misplaced reserved word, etc. They comprise (sentence structure, coordination/subordination, and ordering).

Semantic errors

They occur during the execution of the code, after it has been parsed as grammatically correct. They have to do with how statements are constructed, but with what they mean. They are constituted of miscommunication and ambiguous communication errors.

A semantic error is a violation of the rules of meaning of a natural language or a programming

language. The following sentence contains an error of English semantics:

Ex: My refrigerator just drove a car to Chicago.

If we write or say this sentence, other English speakers may begin to wonder about our sanity, but they will nevertheless know that our syntax is perfectly correct! Since a compiler only checks for correct use of syntax, it is not able to evaluate whether or not we have written code whose meaning is correct. Semantic errors are much harder to detect and correct than syntax errors, and they are also more common.

Omission Error

Ellis (1997), characterised Omission error by the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance. The sentence is characterised by the omitting of an important item. From the writings, Terminale students, are still careless in grammar, moreover, in omitting the item in constructing the sentences.

Addition Error

Addition error is characterised by the presence of an item, which must not appear in a well-formed utterance. Addition errors usually occur in the later stages of L2 acquisition when the learner has already acquired some target language rules.

Disordering Error

Disordering error is characterised by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or a group of morphemes in an utterance. The error in disordering only happens in word order. From the sentences construction, it is found that there are many of errors in disordering.

Analysis of the scripts indicates that errors of disordering are still problematic for EFL learners of English and indicates that students have not yet mastered English rules in how to place the words into the right position to construct a well-formed sentence.

Disordering is putting the words or sentences in the wrong order for example, incorrect placement of adjectives, nouns, or verbs.

Preposition Errors

According to Quirk *et al.*, (1985:8), “a preposition expresses a relation between two entities, one being that represented by the prepositional complement”. A preposition is also a type of word or group of words often placed before nouns, pronouns or gerunds to link them grammatically to other words. Viewed as such, Richards and Schmidt (2002:414) says: “prepositions may express meanings such as direction (from), places (in), possession (of), and time (after)”.

Our study examines prepositions from different perspectives: preposition substitution, double preposition, preposition omission and preposition addition/ insertion.

Preposition Substitution

Preposition substitution occurs when the wrong preposition is selected. Below are some cases of prepositions substitution errors, drawn from our students’ compositions. They tend to use the preposition “for” for instance where the preposition “in” is expected and vice-versa. Errors of such include:

Number	Error	Correction
1	I always spend my Sunday <u>for</u> praising God	(zero)
2	After my Probatoire, I will go <u>for</u> Paris...	(to)
3	In other to fight against homosexuality, people must go <u>to</u> a walk	(for)
4	Tribalism can be caused <u>of</u> favouring a tribe.	(by)
5	...Many people die <u>from</u> homosexuality.	(of)
6	I like to run every day <u>in</u> the road.	(by)
7	Saturday, me and my best friend spent time <u>for</u> visiting people	(in)
8	Homosexuals cannot give birth <u>for</u> children	(to)
9	The most important <u>from</u> these, you gain a good future.	(of these)
10	My village is famous <u>with</u> its waterfalls.	(famous for)
11	I don't like to worry <u>for</u> me.	(about me)
12	I want to introduce you <u>about</u> my Town.	(to)
13	I live with Amina, my best friend, <u>in</u> her home.	(at)

The wrong use of preposition in sentence 2 renders the sentence faulty and incorrect. The “for” preposition used in the sentence: “*After my Probatoire, I will go for Paris...*” is incorrect. The correct answer ought to have been the preposition

“to” because in English, someone goes to somewhere not for somewhere. The same goes to the rest of sentences above mentioned as patterns to this error type. These errors can be associated to cases of negative transfer from French. The French

correspondence of sentence 2 is: “*Après mon probatoire, j’irais pour Paris*”. A close look at this sentence shows that the students did a word-for-

word translation as tried in giving its equivalence in English. In the following table, we will give an account of these errors types gathered in our analyses.

Table 7: Distribution of Preposition Substitution Error

Preposition substitution		
Error subtype	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Preposition substitution	70	35%
Total errors involving preposition	200	100%

Preposition substitution cases recorded 70 cases and a percentage 35%.

Double preposition or preposition combination

A double preposition is a one that is made by combining two simple prepositions. The phrase “out of” for instance is a double preposition given “out

and “of” are both simple prepositions. Instances of double prepositions are many, but it should be noted that some preposition in English rarely occur in sequence. It is the case of the prepositions “since” and “from”. Examples of such instances are therefore elucidated below.

Number	Errors	Correction
1	I was chatted by a homosexual in my school, since from that day...	(Since...Ø)
2	Since from the day my father died...	(Since...Ø)

This error type was very few in our analysis. The count of such errors is presented in the table below.

Table 8: Distribution of Preposition Combination Error

Preposition combination		
Error subtype	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Preposition combination	03	1.5%
Total errors involving preposition	200	100%

Preposition combination errors were 03 cases out of 200 with a percentage of 1.5%.

of prepositions still stands as a barrier to learners as the following examples demonstrate the errors in the omission of preposition.

Preposition Omission

Omission here can be seen as the deletion of a preposition at his rightful position. The correct use

Number	Errors	Correction
1	...I like go -- club and dance.	(going to club)
2	I was waiting -- someone...	(for someone....)
3	I have difficulty -- pronunciation English.	(in English pronunciation)
4	I live -- myself without brothers and my parents	(by myself)
5	I am sure that you are always thinking – me	(of/ about me)
6	I will never go – Bamenda	(go to)

The count of such errors is given in the table below.

Table 9: Distribution of Preposition Omission Error

Preposition omission		
Error subtype	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Preposition omission	47	23.55%
Total errors involving preposition	200	100%

Preposition omission errors were 47 cases out of 200 with a percentage of 23.5%.

Preposition Insertion/ Addition

The insertion of a preposition means adding a preposition where one is not needed. The insertion

of the preposition “of” in between dates and months constitute a wrong in the realisation of prepositions. Below are some unnecessary insertions of prepositions in phrases.

Number	Errors	Correction
1	Going to abroad is not easy for everybody.	(going abroad...)
2	I like go to shopping.	(going shopping...)
3	I recommend to native and foreign people to go there	(recommend native)
4	Parents were on the partisans of the tribalism....	(were partisans)
5	I want to believe on something else.	(believe something...)

In the above examples, the prepositions might have been transferred from French into English but they could also be regarded as errors of substitution where the learner has simply used an incorrect preposition instead of another. However,

errors of addition or omission have been regarded as errors of their own since they cannot really be regarded as either transfer or substitution errors. The count of such errors identified in our analysis gave the following figures in the table below.

Table 10: Distribution of Preposition Insertion Error

Preposition insertion		
Error subtype	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Preposition insertion	80	40%
Total errors involving preposition	200	100%

Preposition insertion errors were 80 cases out of 200 with a percentage of 40%.

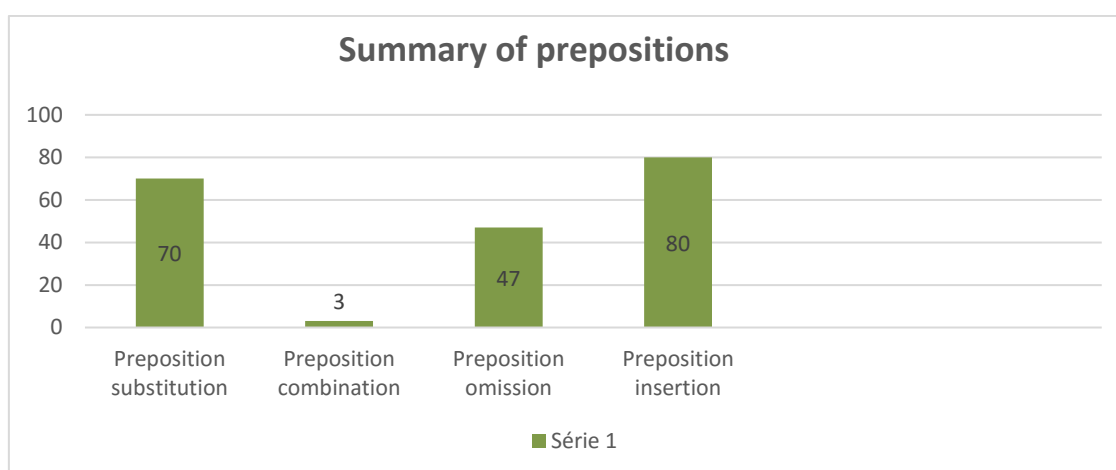
Table 11 below summarises the various types of preposition errors.

Table 11: Summary of Prepositional Errors

Summary of preposition errors		
Error subtype	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Preposition substitution	70	35%
Preposition combination	03	1.5%
Preposition omission	47	23.55%
Preposition insertion	80	40%
Total errors involving preposition	200	100%

From the above table, the highest number of preposition errors was recorded under preposition insertion or addition with 80 out of 200 errors and a percentage of 40%. It was followed by preposition substitution case with 70 cases of errors. The

preposition omission error type preceded with 47 cases noted and the list was rounded by preposition combination with the least cases of errors type (3) with a 1.5% percentage. A summary graph for prepositions errors is given below:



Graph 1: Summary of prepositions

From the above graph, preposition insertion recorded the highest number of errors under the preposition category. Teachers can therefore focus more emerging on teaching this aspect to students.

The results from this graph seem to partly answer one of our research questions set up to guide this study i.e. "What are the various types of grammatical errors found in compositions?"

From the analysis, an interesting fact can therefore be put forward. When ones compare the prepositional uses in French and English, one finds that prepositions in English that have equivalents in French and others that do not. There are structures that are equivalent in both languages and others that are not likewise. Another possible explanation for the occurrence of the errors above is the ignorance of rule restrictions. Francophone learners of English tend to make analogy of what they have learnt and apply it in new situations. Lakkis and Malak (2000) agree with Henning (1978) and with this study that simple prepositions were incorrectly used very frequently by Cameroonian French learners of English due to the transfer of French prepositional knowledge to English.

Based on the findings at this level of the study, it can be affirmed that learners have the inability to rightfully use prepositions at appropriate positions. Findings have revealed that errors in prepositions also occur as a result of negative transfer from French. Since the French preposition

settings are particular, learners tend to find it difficult to place and use English equivalents appropriately.

Nouns and Determiners

A noun is defined as a word that is used to name any person, animal, thing, idea, state, or quality (Russell, 1993). In this study, nouns and determiners are sub classified under plurality, genitive and articles.

The plural marker

Plurals in English Language generally take an -S morpheme at the end of the word. We can have cases of the plural marker omission and cases of plural marker misuse. These cases were noted and classified according as seen below.

Omission of the plural marker

Omission errors occur when a vital element in an utterance or in a word is omitted. In this study, the percentage of errors in plurality is relatively low as compared to other types of grammatical errors. 90 errors were counted in the texts. The type of error identified here is labelled "omission of the plural marker" Examples of errors in plurality includes:

Number	Errors	Correction
1	Homosexuality can cause many disease like Aids...	(diseases)
2	I have some hobby.	(hobbies)
3	I have many book	(books)
4	My brother are in America	(brothers)

A possible explanation of dropping (s) is that, students may not realise that determiners such as *some* and *many* require plural nouns and due to the lack of training or incomprehensibility of the rule such errors may occur.

EFL Learners of English in general and Francophone Learners of English in particular tend to confuse between regular and irregular plural nouns. They tend to keep the irregular plural as singular when it is plural.

Morphological errors like the above are attributed by some researchers to overgeneralisation

and a simplification strategy on the learners' part. This means that in order to simplify things, learners often sub-categorise certain countable nouns as uncountable nouns and vice versa. Thus, the students' failure to mark plural countable nouns could probably be due to a subconscious learning strategy employed by them to lighten their memory load when managing new English data input.

The above examples show that omission of the - s morpheme to express plurality is still a major problem to EFL learners. The count of such errors gave the figures gathered in table 12.

Table 12: Distribution of Plural Marker Omission Error

Distribution of plural marker omission error		
Error subtype	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Plural omission	40	14.54%
Total errors involving nouns	250	100%

Plural omission cases recorded 40 cases and a percentage of 14.54%.

Misuse of the Plural Marker

Nouns in English fall under count and uncountable nouns. Countable nouns take the plural

form "-S", whereas the uncountable ones do not take a plural form. While some respondents are inclined to leave out the (s) morpheme in plural countable nouns, others have an affinity for inserting the (s) morpheme in singular countable nouns as well as uncountable nouns. These errors could be

repercussions of constant corrections to mark their plural nouns, and thus the learners are prompted to insert the s morpheme when they should not and cannot do so.

A possible explanation for this is that students try to over-generalise the rule where (s) is added to all plurals.

The following examples demonstrate the examples of the wrong or missing use of the Plural Morpheme "s".

Number	Error	Correction
1	Many child are smoking now.	(children)
2	...with all this advices....	(pieces of advice).
3	My father has a lot of car, restaurant...	(a lot of cars, restaurants)
4	I have learnt to live myself without your helps.	(...without your help)
5	I like very much Cameroonian foods in restaurants.	(...Cameroonian food)

From the above, uncountable nouns such as “food”, “help” take an unnecessary plural therefore

making the above sentences erroneous. The count of such errors is given in the table below.

Table 13: Distribution of Plural Misuse

Distribution of plural misuse		
Error subtype	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Plural misuse	30	10.90%
Total errors involving nouns	250	100%

As table 13 shows, the misuse of plurals recorded 30 cases for a percentage rate of 10.90%.

Subject-Verb Agreement (Concord) Errors

Agreement can be seen as a linguistic element that shows the syntactic links that exist between words. The subject-verb agreement rule is that singular nouns are followed by singular forms of the verb and plural nouns are followed by the plural forms of the verb. Researchers classified these types of errors as both tense and S-V agreement errors.

According to Quirk *et al.*, (1985), “the most important type of concord (agreement) in English

language is concord of number between subject and verb” as in the following examples:

- * The window is open
(Singular + singular)
- * The windows are opened
(Plural + plural)

This was the area with great sampling with a total of 50 attempts. It is evident that this item had a great percentage of errors (15.65%) in this study. This can be well illustrated in the examples below:

Number	Errors	Corrections
1	When I were at my father’s house...	(was)
2	When we was finished with classes I go to game house	(were)
3	My best subject are Spanish.	(is)
4	I’ve never ate snake the way some people say they has	(had)
5	All of us was happy	(were)
6	Homosexuality are a problem for Cameroon	(is)

Examples 1-4 show a variety of ways that learners can make subject-verb agreement errors.

In examples 1, the student has used the wrong form of the verb “be”. Many learners might have difficulties with this type of construction, since the phrase “If I were you” is grammatically correct. However, the only times that “were” is accepted is in phrases that start with an “If construction” or a matter of “wish” e.g. in “I wish I were you” and “If I were you”.

These grammatical constructions are often called “the subjunctive mood” and indicate a non-factual condition. In example 1, however, it is used incorrectly, since the sentence describes something that has actually happened.

Subject verb agreement errors usually occur due to the fact that the students have not yet mastered the use of 1st person singular and 3rd person singular/plural. Example 4 differs from the other examples, since the phrase includes the plural noun “people”. The student seems to have used the singular form of the verb assuming that “people” is an

uncountable noun. Uncountable nouns, such as “money” or “news”, which always takes the singular form and can only be used with a singular verb, are often problematic for L2 and L3 learners of English.

Examples of errors in Subject-Verb Agreement:
Plural subject does not agree with singular verb:

- * The people thinks those smoke cigarettes are adult. (think)

- * Although many people knows about smoking dangerous. (know)
Singular subject does not agree with plural verb:
- * It encourage smokers to smoke. (encourages)
- * The cigarette company have the major roles (has)
- * The more dangerous results is gum infection (are).

Table 14: Distribution Errors in Subject-verb Agreement

Distribution of errors in subject-verb agreement		
Error subtype	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Errors in subject-verb agreement	60	18.75%
Total errors involving verbs	320	100%

As Table 13 shows, the wrong use of concord recorded 50 errors with a 15.65% percentage.

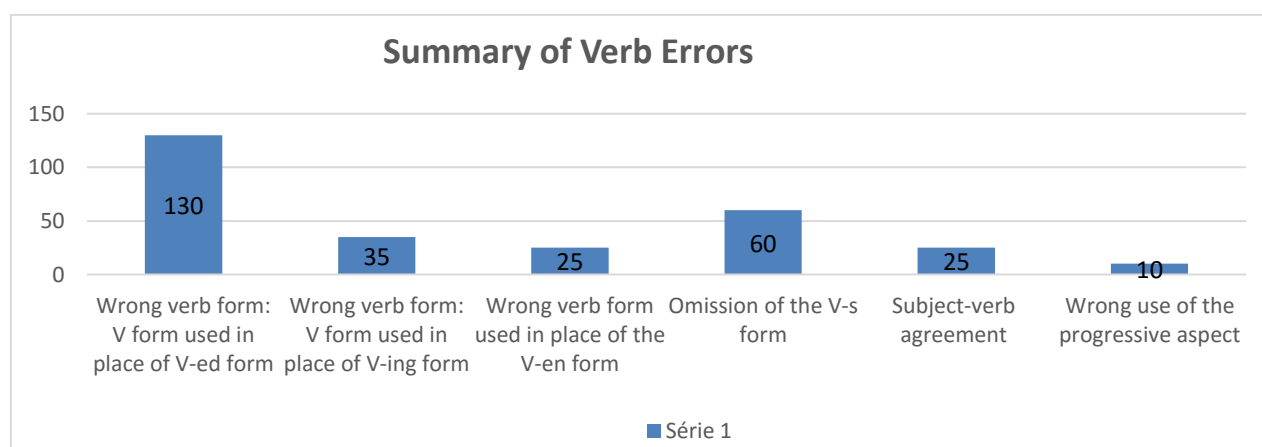
Summarily, the count of errors identified at the level of verbs gave the following figures (table 14)

Table 15: Summary of Verb Form and Verb Tense errors

Error subtype	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Wrong verb form: V-form used in place of the V-ed form	130	40.62%
Wrong verb form: V-form used in place of the V-ing form	35	10.94%
Wrong verb form: V-form used in place of the V-en form	25	7.81%
Omission of the V-s form	60	18.75%
Subject-verb agreement	60	18.75%
Wrong use of the progressive aspect	10	3.13%
Total	320	100%

The highest number of verb errors was recorded under wrong verb form: V form used in place of V-ed form with 130 errors and a percentage of 40.62% followed by the Omission of the V-s form

and Subject-verb agreement both with 18.75% of errors. Other errors type percentage was also recorded as summarise in the upcoming graph summarising verb errors.



Graph 2: Summary of Verb Errors

From graph 2, wrong verb form used in place of V-ed recorded the highest number of errors. This is more than a prove that francophone learners of English in Cameroon have serious problems when it comes to the use of English verbs and tenses. Teachers are therefore, called upon to pay a serious attention to this problem. These results in Graph 2 seem to partly answer one of our research questions

set up to guide this study i.e. “What are the various types of grammatical errors found in compositions?”

From the analysis, an interesting fact can therefore be put forward. Francophone premiere classes’ learners of English, do word-for-word transfer from French to English, thus, causing them to use wrong verb forms and tenses. Based on the

findings at this level of the study, we can affirm that our informants are unable to use right verbs at appropriate positions. Findings have revealed that errors in verbs occur as a result of negative transfer from French. Since the present tense aspect of verbs in French is unmarked, learners tend to find it difficult to find English verbs equivalents.

Verbs are seen here as one of the types of errors found in students' compositions as they include: Wrong verb form: V form used in place of V-ed (40.62% of 320 errors), wrong verb form: V form used in place of V-ing (10.94% of 320 errors), wrong verb form: V form used in place of V-en (7.81% of 320 errors), omission of the V-s form (18.75% of 320 errors), subject-verb agreement (18.75% of 320 errors) and wrong use of the progressive aspect (3.13% of 320 errors).

Analysis of the students' compositions demonstrates a range of grammatical errors. In this study, it has been diagnosed that wrong use of prepositions, plural morpheme "s"; S-V disagreement, and non-mastery of parts of speech, verb forms and verb tenses are the top common writing errors committed by EFL learners of English. Verb and preposition errors are the two most common error types by EFL learners. In the subcategories of each error type, omission errors are the most common ones.

The data collected from questionnaires set the basis for the experiment and the results of the experiment permitted us to come up with the conclusions of our research.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The objective of this study is to assess the effectiveness of the Competency-based Approach in Cameroon especially in the Terminale classes, by assessing the correlation between language usage (grammar) in real-life communication situations and the performance of students in assessments; with a focus on EFL Learners in various types of schools in yaounde. The specific objectives included: finding out whether learners are in contact with English Language in real-life situations, finding out the frequency of usage of the English language in real-life situations and investigating the correlation between language use in real-life situations and performance in assessments. The research was guided by the following three research questions:

RQ1: Do learners get the chance to be in contact with the English language out of the classroom?

RQ2: Why do EFL learners still make many grammatical errors?

RQ3: What is the frequency of usage of the CBA method in teaching grammar?

RQ4: What is the impact of the CBA method on Learners' grammatical performance in assessments?

To answer these questions, we formulated the following research hypotheses:

RH 1: EFL Learners find it difficult to adapt the CBA method to grammatical rules

RH2: EFL Learners do neither speak nor write English Language out of the classroom situation, and do not correlate to the CBA method while using the language.

RH3: The frequency of usage of the English language has a direct impact on learner performances in examinations.

RH4: The more learners use the English Language in RLS, the better their performance in assessments.

The findings based on essays written by Terminale students of the selected schools revealed that all Terminale, irrespective of the school and despite the use of the CBA teaching/learning method, committed the following errors: wrong use of auxiliaries, tenses, concords, articles, prepositions, pronouns, plurals, mother tongue interference, infinitives and auxiliary with past tense.

After exploiting the data collected through questionnaires, it was realised that EFL learners still make many grammatical errors, in spite of the CBA method used. This study aimed at assessing how francophone students perform grammatically in a CBA teaching method context and from the data collected, one can easily see how difficult it is for them. It turned out that, out of the 100 respondents, 87% of them had major difficulties in writing. From the data obtained through the use of a questionnaire and the interview, it was noticed that the sources of learners' errors were diverse. These sources of errors run as follows:

- **Less Exposure to English Language**

It was noticed that EFL students do not have adequate exposure to English Language prior to their secondary school experiences and this has an effect on them. Indeed, the teachers remarked that most of the students only began studying English in secondary school. Even where English is taught to the learners at the elementary level, to better prepare them for future challenges in the secondary school, such teaching programme is markedly limited in content and focuses as the case of terminale classes, where the implementation of the CBA method does not have a clear-cut syllabus and course programme. This is so because those who teach it are themselves many at times incompetent in the CBA teaching/learning method of language, and were not properly trained to teach English grammar in a CBA context. As a result, the children get to secondary school with very little competence in the English

language and with poor understanding of the CBA method. Even in secondary school, all eight teachers agreed that the students do not have enough practical writing exercises due to lesson duration. For the most part, focus is on grammar and vocabulary exercises, which are scarcely tested in writing.

• **Poor Motivation**

Motivation, as already said, is a key factor influencing the acquisition of a second language. Depending on how motivated the students are, one could understand the students' level in a second language or foreign language; for the higher the motivation is, generally, the faster the acquisition of a language will be. In the present study, however, we have seen that though high, the students' motivation did not really enhance their mastery of English questions. Evidence for the high motivation of our respondents towards English has been given throughout the essays they provided. Indeed, 87% of the respondents do not pay particular attention to their English grammar proficiency as they think first in their L1 before translating their thoughts in English. This shows that their motivation towards English is mainly instrumental. Instrumental motivation, as advocated by some scholars, concerns those who study a second language for educational purpose or to seek for job opportunities. Other works by Tchindji Fomo (2007), Djieuga Tchouatcho (2008) on attitude of Francophone learners towards English have demonstrated that the latter were more and more motivated to study English, although their performances in the language remained low.

Though motivated, the performances of our respondents were also very low and a close look at the data collected on the field made us examine the environment of study of our respondents, as well as the teaching methods used by the teachers.

• **The students' Environment of Study**

The first step in examining the students' environment of study is by knowing if they speak English language out of the classroom or if English is only studied as a school subject. The data collected showed that English is clearly a school subject. This acknowledgment is representative enough of the type of environment in which francophone learners of English learn that language. These statistics show that our respondents are not exposed to the language out of their classroom, and that makes the learning of the language more difficult. In addition, with a weekly load of 4 hours to 8 hours, we can see that the contact our respondents have with English is not enough for them to be able to master the language as quickly and as well as it should be done.

From what has just been said, one sees that the social context in which the francophone students

evolve does not really favour their use of grammar, and consequently, diminishes their capacity of mastering this element of language.

• **The teaching Methods Used by Teachers.**

A close look at the way grammar is taught to francophone students makes one to partly attribute to the teaching methods, and the students' poor performance in the mastery of English grammar. First, we have realised from the analysis of our data that a great number of students do not know the various components of English grammar. They produce essays based on their knowledge of their L1 without being able to know their equivalences in English. This means that the teachers do not clearly show them the specificities of each grammar components in accordance with the CBA method.

Pedagogic Relevance

The present study focused on the effective implementation of CBA-RLS in EFL learners of secondary schools. It aimed at investigating the correlation between real-life communication out of the classroom and performance in assessments within the framework of the CBA. The findings revealed that the effective implementation of the CBA-RLS in EFL learners' areas of Cameroon, remains a myth due to the little or no possibility of contact between students and the English language in real-life communication, where the students can use the language for problem-solving and use their experience as input for the next classes. Mindful of the above, this work is beneficial to the ministries of education, pedagogic inspectors in charge of bilingualism, teachers and students.

Since the study highlights a major setback to the implementation of the CBA-RLS in Terminale classes and equally makes suggestions, it will help educational authorities to look into the problem and resolve it to ensure that students of all areas have equal chances of learning and speaking English

To regional pedagogic inspectors in charge of bilingualism, this work will serve as an eye-opener to the difficulties that teacher of English to francophones face in applying CBA-RLS. This work encourages the development of more context adapted ways of teaching English to francophones so as to enhance learners' mastery of the CBA and use of effective grammar.

For students, this work will make them take consciousness of their natural and sociolinguistic disadvantage, and thereby, push them to double efforts to learn the language.

CONCLUSION

This study has proven that the absence of real-life communication situations is a major setback to the effective application of the CBA in Cameroon as it is directly linked to the learners' ability to use language for problem-solving out of the classroom and, consequently, their performance in assessments. This study, therefore, established that the effective implementation of the CBA-RLS in Cameroon is hindered in francophone areas by the lack of real life communication, therefore, leading to the non-attainment of competency and massive failure in public examinations. Thereby reveals that the CBA-RLS in the Cameroonian context is still a myth in francophone areas.

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